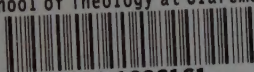


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VISION AND STRENGTH

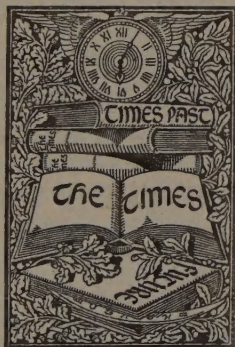
PROBLEMS OF LIFE AND FAITH

BEING ESSAYS FROM "THE TIMES"

THIRD SERIES

SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY
SIR JAMES MARCHANT
K.B.E., LL.D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK



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INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST SERIES

BY THE MOST REV.
THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

It is a striking illustration of the present widespread interest in religion that a great newspaper like *The Times* should have given a column, week by week, for several years, to an essay dealing directly with the moral and spiritual life. Many of these essays have qualities of style, of thought, of spirit which make it natural to wish that they should be preserved in a form more accessible than the files of a newspaper. Accordingly, in this book a selection and a rearrangement of them have been made, and I have been asked by Sir James Marchant to write a few words of introduction to it. I have no personal knowledge of the anonymous authors. I write simply as one of the many readers of *The Times* who, Saturday by Saturday, have been interested, stimulated, and helped by these essays. We found it a relief, a welcome change, to turn from the record of passing things to these reminders of the things that are eternal. From men of all sorts and conditions—preachers, teachers, politicians, soldiers, sailors, men of business—I have often heard words of gratitude to the authors for writing these essays, and to *The Times* for publishing them.

The present time may not be marked by religious

observance, but it is assuredly marked by religious interest, inquiry, aspiration. Whatever else the tremendous experience of the Great War has done, it has set men thinking, questioning, caring about the fundamental problems of life, of the spirit, of God. Often those who say least are thinking most. Again, there is a strong movement away from the materialistic philosophy which, if rarely formulated, was widely assumed towards the conviction that, as Goethe said, "The spiritual is alone the real"—that spiritual values stand for the highest degree of reality, and that the only ultimate reality is God. And when men begin to care about the preservation and vindication of spiritual values and desire to know God as spirit knows Spirit, they are inevitably brought with a new intensity of interest and expectation to the gracious and commanding figure of Jesus Christ. As one of the authors of these essays says: "Goodness, truth, and beauty can only be attained as they are seen in a person, for only then do they evoke that goodness, truth, and beauty which lie dormant in ourselves. If personal being is ignored, such terms as righteousness, love, truth are mere words without life, without meaning. It is because Christianity proclaims their existence in a Person that it can produce that ardour and glow which fires the spirit of man to make the ideal a reality in his own personal experience and gives him power to express it in terms of his own life."

But many of those who are thus finding their own way to the Christian Faith are hindered rather than helped by the conventional language in which that Faith is often expressed. Such language does not interpret their own experience. It carries with it associations which are not real to them. It seems to me that it is to such men and women that these

essays have made, and are fitted to make, a special appeal. For they avoid the technical terms of theology and phrases which have become to many formal and unreal. They are written with a wide outlook on human life, and with a very full sympathy with the difficulties, the tendencies, and the desires of the modern world. Yet they are filled with a deep reverence for the great Christian tradition, and along many and varied avenues of thought they lead the reader to Him Who is its source and abiding centre. In their divers portions and divers manners they keep to one main purpose—to vindicate to this generation the claim of Christ, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

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PROBLEMS OF LIFE

I

THE LENS OF LIFE

*Insight
Vision*

A SENSE of true values is one of the highest of all endowments. It gives a man the power to come to a right decision when challenged by the contrarient claims of life, enabling him to look beyond appearances and to see into the heart of things. Those who possess this power are beguiled neither by passing fashions nor by current opinions, for they have learned to estimate things as they are, and to see them in their relation to reality.

Many men find life a great puzzle, of which they never gain the clue. The world to them is little more than a ceaseless struggle in which the fortunes of battle are for the strong or cunning, if they are not the sport of chance. They see no moral significance in experience. It may be that what happens is according to a law which moves in the sure processes of its predetermined activity, to which men must needs submit as to irresistible decrees. These men see no order around them, discern no principles, and find no purpose in what

is to them the meaningless phantasmagoria of life. Regarding themselves as the victims of Fate, they rise in rebellion or sink into apathy, if only to escape the torture of its heartless sentences.

When once a man is convinced of the reality of a moral purpose in life and finds its source and end in the will of a Personal God he must needs believe that He shapes life to the achievement of what is true, good, and beautiful. The depth of this conviction depends on the power of man's insight. We can never know the secrets of the Divine Mind except so far as they are disclosed to us, but the measure of our apprehension is dependent on our power of discernment. We must bring the hearing ear and the seeing eye before the contents of revelation can be recognized. For knowledge implies not only that there is something to be known, but also that there is some one who has the power of perceiving it, and is able to use it with settled purpose. Revelation presupposes insight, and both serve their purpose only when they act in unity.

Insight depends on something more than the mind. It is not the result of intellectual activity, however well-trained and venturesome. The whole of our manhood's powers must be exercised if we would come to a true view and a right judgment on any matter of moral significance.

Modern psychology shows that we are influenced in different degrees by our intellect, our affections, our moral sense, our instincts, and the rest. If any of these powers become disproportionate our judgment is affected. Intellectualism has no pleasing history, and, divorced from other activities of human life, it has done singularly little either for the knowledge or the happiness of men. Emotionalism has also its dark pages, which perhaps record the worst degradations of mankind. Even the endeavour to give prominence to moral obligations when other parts of our nature are neglected has not seldom clouded men's lives with a dourness which has hidden from them all joy and peace. For true insight, which is the lens of life, must be properly focussed and kept clean by a rightly ordered will.

The seers of revelation are distinguished by gifts which enabled them to discern eternal truth in passing incidents, and to see clearly where all to their fellows was inscrutable. We are driven to a sense of wonder at the power of the Old Testament prophets to discern the secrets of God and man in the fortunes of their people or in their own personal history. They had the gift of insight by which they went past the surface of appearance to discover what was behind it. Before them the evasions of convention, the

subterfuges of national policy, the deception of self-interest, the specious pleas of self-delusion were swept away, and truth was disclosed with remorseless clarity. But they were able to do this only because they had learnt to look at life from the vantage ground of faith in God, Who had taught them what was in His mind. They estimated human affairs and character in the balance of the Divine judgment. Just as there are men who can discern diversities of colour where others see only dull grey or black, or hear songs where others find all silent, so the prophets discerned moral purpose where their fellows saw blind chance or the meaningless operation of natural law.

To acquire this gift of spiritual vision we must be pure in heart, patient, teachable. We must stand at the right point of view, and, like the artist who to look at his work in its true proportion stands away from it in thoughtful contemplation, so must we withdraw from our work and its claims that from the height of God's mountain of vision we may look at the world to which we must needs return to complete our life's task. Intuition has been described as the unconscious notice we take of things. Insight is the conscious estimate of their moral value.

We need not be surprised to find that even

when men recognize the reality of the spiritual world they differ in their apprehension of its contents and purpose. We possess varied degrees of insight, but we can all improve such powers as we already possess. If we live faithfully in such light as we have we shall be prepared for the fuller rays of the Divine revelation, which otherwise might blind us by their excessive brightness. Insight tested in experience brings its own amplitude of knowledge until a man passes beyond the empiricism of opinion to the confidence of tested conviction, and, dealing with that which is temporal in the light of the eternal, finds in both the true harmony of life.

II

INTEREST IN LIFE

IN Melanesia depopulation has been ascribed to a lack of interest in life. Christian missionaries and the magistrates, it is said, have deprived the inhabitants of their old religious customs ; particularly they prohibit head-hunting, a practice which was the centre of all the social and religious institutions which controlled the energies of the people. Deprived of head-hunting, and with no new interest of equal power, the people die out because they have ceased to be interested in life.

Johnson once declared that "a man must accept life on the terms upon which it is offered to him." He had been speaking of the necessity of a man's abstinence when he found that even a slight indulgence in drink destroyed his balance. The truth has a wider significance. If a man fails to fulfil the true conditions of life, and does not seek to put it to its true use, he must inevitably lose not only something of its power, but also something of its interest to himself. The ideal of

life is the complete self-realization of the individual. This implies a proper fulfilment of his duties to his fellows. Accepting these terms, a man finds a permanent and growing significance in life, an ever-widening sphere of interests in the perception of powers which find their fullest exercise in new efforts to make the best of himself and of the world. While he is animated by this experience he can never become listless. Life will retain its charm and dignity. Its inherent interest will remain.

We may judge a man's moral worth by the nature and extent of the things which most interest him. One man may be absorbed in money-getting, another in the pursuit of pleasure, a third in the possession of reputation or power. A man lives in proportion to the nature of the things to which he devotes his life.

It is obvious that what occupies only his lowest powers, to the exclusion of the higher elements in his personality, must sooner or later fail to satisfy him. It is in the light of this fact that we may account for the satiety or disillusion of those who have made money, pleasure, or reputation the goal of their efforts. These things end with themselves, and leave their slaves stricken with the sense of life's futility. The question "Is life worth living?" cannot be raised seriously by one

who has learnt to exercise the full powers of his manhood and knows the large possibilities which belong to it.

An irreligious age is always pessimistic. Without religion men are like the Melanesians. They lose interest in life, and die in sheer disgust at its dullness. And what is plain in communities is manifest in individuals. We are not surprised that Schopenhauer, the exponent of pessimism, regarded religious faith as a pernicious illusion. What other conclusion can we come to than that life is a blunder or a tragedy when we substitute belief in a personal God by acquiescence in an irrational and unconscious will as the ground and substance of the world? It is here that we come upon one of the most persuasive qualities of religion. It adds indefinitely to the interest of life. Without it, even for the most fortunate of men, life must appear crippled and limited in its powers. But to know its true joy, religion must be something more than a theory or a theological system, even when its historical basis is accepted. It must be a matter of experience, a living force in a man's thoughts, the determinative factor in his dealings with his fellow-men and his work in the world. When religion is this to a man life becomes an adventure, not only in things seen, but in things unseen, disclosing to him continually clearer

visions of goodness, truth, and beauty, not merely external to himself, but operative in his own soul.

As we look at the world to-day we do not find it difficult to see the causes of a pessimism which is more widespread than we might suppose. Men can never be cheated into happiness by improved circumstances. We may banish one social wrong after another and raise the standard of living indefinitely, but these things are not inconsistent with retrogression in life itself. Some of the most thoughtful observers of modern tendencies do not hesitate to declare their belief that civilization is approaching a long period of blight and decay. But this can be true only in so far as we are neglecting the recuperating and rejuvenating power of that religion which has been so powerful an agent in the purification of our ideals and so mighty a stimulant in men's efforts to attain them. Any hope we may have for revival and progress in all that constitutes the highest well-being of men depends on their willingness to recognize the realities of the spiritual life.

It is not our present argument that a religious man makes the best of both worlds. We are rather concerned to point out that he finds the most interest in the present. Life means more to him in proportion as he learns to see and appraise circumstance and fortune in the light of

those spiritual realities which disclose their meaning and reveal their purpose to faith. He is saved alike from the stupor of ennui, the despair of disillusion, the fussiness of distraction, and the frenzy of fear. He sees moral purpose everywhere, and turns to his daily work as an opportunity of service to God and man, meeting even the darkest hour in confidence that the light will show him at least the next step on the way of duty. Nothing is commonplace to a man who has learnt this secret, and for him the zest of life remains both in its present attainments and its infinite possibilities.

III

THE INWARD CONFLICT

LIFE is often compared to a war, and every one admits the fitness of the comparison. As soon as we wake to full self-consciousness we know ourselves to be engaged in a conflict both within and without from which we cannot retire. Some of the most poignant passages in literature express this experience of the clash of opposition within men, and we are compelled to confess that what they affirm corresponds to our experience.

It may be true that there are some favoured souls who see the beauty of goodness in the early days of their moral consciousness, and remaining faithful to that vision are spared the contest between rival claimants for their hearts' allegiance. But for most men there is an inward struggle which they may for a time ignore, but which sooner or later holds them fast. Whatever their circumstances may be, they cannot escape the conflict. The outward ordering of a man's life may make for quiet contentment or secure

enjoyment, but he is thrown into turmoil by rebellious desire, the struggle of an unquiet conscience, or, it may be, the challenge of a duty which he fears to discharge.

This battle within has its own varied character for each of us, though it is by no means always the same in any man. In youth he may feel within himself the riot of conflicting desires, rebellious alike against reason and conscience. In middle age he is challenged by a long and cunning ambushade of envy, greed, or love of ease by which the citadel of the soul is wrapped in gloom and moral aspiration dies down. Then perhaps the struggle is more deadly than at any other time. Whatever our lot may be, it is folly to ignore the reality of this contest or to be careless about its issue. Everything depends on it. We are made or marred by our conduct in this war from which there is no discharge until we withdraw from it into the resting-place of death.

It is by no means always a war between good and evil. Indeed, the fiercest battle for many men consists in the struggle within the soul between the good and the better. Thus it comes about that men of the finest moral powers and highest ideals may feel the contest most severely. They have as the result of long discipline gained their freedom from the coarse desires of impulse or

the enticements of wayward imagination. Their passions have been brought into obedience to the will, but, having secured the good, they are challenged to yield allegiance to that which is better or the best, and self, feeling robbed of its proper ease, is disinclined to further energy. Or a man may be caught in the contest between human love and Divine love, not that these are different in kind or are contrary one to the other, but they differ in the claims they make upon men. Or duty to the community may conflict with duty to the individual, and the clash of conflicting claims rages within the soul. This war is no less painful because it has its own nobility.

One great encouragement always exists for those who are most distracted by the inner battle. It is the supreme means of moral progress, and those who confront it bravely have always the consciousness of victory. It is worth remembering that the New Testament, which most vividly describes this inward conflict, uniformly declares that victory may be assured to all who bear themselves bravely in it, and that their triumph is no future reward but a present attainment. The Christian warrior has that within himself which frees him from the weakening fear of defeat and endows him with the strength of a constantly growing mastery which is the sure

guerdon of ultimate triumph. In that power he is the man who is overcoming. His conflict is a sure advance to victory.

When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle : the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life !
Never leave growing till the life to come !

These are two ways in which we may try to decide the issue of that struggle. There is the method of stern repression, of asceticism. It is a noble way, and all may employ it to their gain. If a man would win his life he must be content to lose it, and it may be necessary to cut off the hand or pluck out the eye to preserve life. But this cannot be complete victory. Why should we not preserve life with all our powers and faculties with added grace ? This is the ideal, and it may be achieved by the continual reinforcement of spiritual power. To use St Paul's term, we may be strengthened with power through the Divine Spirit in the inward man. For the religion which has its origin in One who gives His Presence and His power to all who in His name would fight against evil assures them of new energies of Divine Life in their contest. Even in time of defeat, in the sudden rush of passion, in

the deceits of self-interest or the beguilements of the world, He comes to raise and strengthen His servants that they may go forward in His power, being assured that though the struggle is keen and bitter, the issue rests with him who relies on the strength of the Victor who will at last put all enemies under His feet.

IV

SELF-DEPRECIATION

MORALISTS constantly warn us against self-conceit. Religious teachers repeat the counsel, and have every justification, for many men come short of their possibilities because they are persuaded that they have already attained as much as can be required from them. They end in self-congratulation and recognize no need for moral progress.

Allowing that self-conceit first robs a man of the desire and then of the power of improvement, we find that those who go to the opposite extreme and habitually depreciate themselves also become hopeless about their power to advance in virtue. The results of self-conceit and self-abasement seem to be the same. They both induce a man to believe that he can hope for nothing better. They alike make him unimprovable—which is the worst of all fates. But while the dangers of self-conceit are emphasized, the perils of self-depreciation are often ignored.

Experience often seems to justify despondency of soul. Men have tried to accomplish some work and the result is manifest failure; they have struggled against their passions only to suffer the dull experience of complete defeat. Their recognition of moral beauty and strength seems but a dark revelation of their own vileness, and they are so depressed by the comparison that they are stricken to despair. Some of the noblest men and women have gone through this experience. The writings of the saints are full of self-depreciation, even self-loathing. It has been a constant charge since the beginning that Christianity takes a mean estimate of human nature. It certainly does not disguise human weakness. There is nothing in the New Testament to approve of the notion that a man has only to know the good in order to attain it. Some of our modern teachers may make this their doctrine and bid us go forward with the confidence of an optimism which recognizes no failure, but there are facts of experience which they seem to ignore.

We may confess that self-distrust seems not seldom to be more than justified. The contrast between the beauty and strength of the perfect moral life at which we are bidden to aim with the imperfections of which we are conscious is humiliating. Conscious of our own weakness, we find

an excuse for apathy, and suppose that moral effort on our part can only serve to expose our failure. The slothful, the selfish, the cowardly find in their ineffectiveness an excuse from every attempt either to secure their own moral self-improvement or to advance the ethical standards of society. Not only do they cease to believe in their own possibilities, they despair of progress for the world, so that they expect good neither in themselves nor in others. Ceasing to reverence their own manhood, they lose the power to appreciate what is true and beautiful and good, and by the perversion of moral judgment view life as either a disease, a delusion, or an unintelligible chaos.

It is not enough to advise these victims of their own self-depreciation to rise up and take part in the struggle for what is true and right. There must, indeed, be a real conflict against evil within and without in every man worthy of the name. The world is a battlefield, and the heart is an arena where bitter conflict must be waged. The Christian is rightly described as a soldier engaged in a combat with evil, and always he must be on the watch and ready armed. While life lasts there can be no cessation in this warfare. But the odds of the struggle are against men, and even when victory is won often the man is so battered

and crippled that apparently he is unable to enjoy his triumph. All around us are men who have made the struggle, and, having failed, are content to compromise with the enemy.

We may find some encouragement in the practice of auto-suggestion, and no doubt we have in ourselves moral capacities which may be evoked and grow in force by auto-suggestion. We may also be roused by suggestions which come from outside, good example, strong and sympathetic companionship, the challenge of an event. But even when what is attempted is achieved by these means the man may still be shadowed by the fear that the sources of improvement may any day fail him and leave him in a worse state than before.

We require a power not ourselves working within ourselves for righteousness. Christianity discloses that power as Divine action in the soul, and describes it as grace. Our teachers sometimes refer to it as if it were confined to certain channels from which alone it can be obtained. The Christian cannot doubt that in the ordinances of the Church he comes into contact with energies of Divine life for the strengthening and refreshing of his soul, and no Christian wishing to avail himself of all the moral and spiritual energies placed at his disposal will neglect them. But this grace

is not confined to sacraments, and a man who would save himself from the torpor which ensues from the conviction of his own moral feebleness and spiritual weakness will do well to seek that supernatural strength which allied with our natural powers enables us to reach to the full dignity of our manhood. Then, and not till then, he will know what the Apostle meant by his declaration, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

V

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

LENT can be observed in several ways, but it cannot be better spent than when it is used to lead men to consider their own spiritual condition and to encourage them to a more loyal personal discipleship.

True religion must have its centre in a man's own spiritual life. But it is never easy to find out exactly what sort of a man one really is, and many, if not most, men have never really made this discovery. Great numbers of them have not even attempted the task, and probably the best use they could make of Lent would be to spend it in the search for their real selves. There is no reason why this should make men self-absorbed to the neglect of others' welfare. Indeed, we must fail in our service to God and ourselves, as well as to our fellow-men, if we do not gain this knowledge. It is the first condition of true moral well-being and spiritual progress.

Man is the only creature in the world who has

the power of self-reflection. He alone can turn his mind upon itself and look into the secret chambers of his own life with understanding. His is the gift of self-knowledge. It is the most important of all knowledge, but the most difficult to attain. Without it a man must be a fool. Psychologists sometimes amuse or alarm us by their reports of what the victims of self-fantasy may think or do. Quick in their judgment of others, they invent entirely false images of themselves and act as if they were true. It is not by any means always an image which is better than the real self, and it may be poorer and meaner, but whatever it is it becomes the controlling force of conduct. This is the tragedy of many lives. Men are strangers to themselves. What they are and what they think they are have no correspondence with each other. They live in a world of fantasy and are the victims of their own self-delusion.

It is the part of a wise man to be on his guard against even the slightest untruth in his estimate of himself, lest life should end in the tragedy of self-deception. To attain true self-knowledge a man must take time to be alone. The world must be bidden to remain out-of-doors while he enters into the secret chambers of his soul. All moralists have urged the duty of self-examination,

and some of the most impressive incitements to its practice are to be found in the writings of the Stoics. The masters of the spiritual life in Christendom have also recommended it. No doubt introspection has its dangers, but they will be avoided if care is taken to bring in that light which, while it reveals the true condition of the man, manifests the capacities he possesses for amendment and progress. For the truth about ourselves must tell us not only what we are, but also what we may become. The latter is as important as the former.

The revelation to a man of his real self is the most wonderful of all visions that can come to him. When once he has learned it, life has a new meaning. He may refuse to accept it, and his fate will have all the tragedy of moral self-destruction. But those who have acquired this knowledge, and have availed themselves of its mingled warnings and encouragements, will go forward with a zeal which can never tire in the endeavour to attain an ideal which can never disappoint. For He who reveals to us what we are is quick to show us what we may be, being as ready to inspire us to new endeavours for the future as to forgive us the sins of the past. It is true that we may find out something of what we are by comparison with our fellows ; but this

can never produce a final, and may prove an entirely false, picture. We may compare ourselves with some external standard and judge ourselves by it as the law of life, but since it is external it will not reveal our motives and affections. We may judge ourselves by the inner law of conscience, but not until it is educated by the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, the Light which is in Him who is the Light and Life of men, can we come to a full knowledge of our real selves.

Self-knowledge gained by this method is true knowledge. It may be humiliating, but it always inspires us to new endeavours. The fisherman of Galilee may fling himself at the feet of his Master, and in the self-disclosure that had come to him declare himself unworthy to remain in His presence, but he becomes the chief of the Apostles. We need never fear the truth about ourselves if we learn it in the Divine Presence. If nowhere else do we see in ourselves so evident a poverty of moral strength, so weak a power of spiritual life, we are also able here, as nowhere else, to discern new capacities and new powers which will lift us to a life of nobler attainment and wider service.

VI

SELF-DETERMINATION

MODERN psychology is steadily making its influence felt in our conception of personality. The old faculty psychology is being rejected. We may no longer think of a person as possessing faculties of thought, desire, and will. Less stress is made on these than on cognition, feeling, and conation. Cognition represents our awareness of what is the object of thought, feeling is all that affects our condition with regard to it, while conation is the active element in consciousness, including what is called the will. Though we may consider these separately, in actual life they affect and interpretate each other in such a way that none is entirely uninfluenced by the others. Man is not merely a unit ; he is a person, and we cannot in experience separate personality into its different elements if we would conceive its true character.

But " the will is the man." His true self is to be found in his power of self-determination. Only as he acts freely does he reach the fullness of his

being. But because the will must work in certain conditions in a very real way it must be limited in its activity. Yet it need never be the slave of circumstances or the victim of necessity. What Bergson calls the miracle of the will, its freedom, still remains so real that it can put to its own use the conditions which seem to limit its power. A wish must be distinguished from an act of the will. We may wish for something while we recognize that it is beyond our power to attain. Wishes have no power over circumstance. Will, on the other hand, can be exercised only with regard to what we believe can be achieved or enjoyed. The will may be engaged on a difficult task, but never without hope of success of making circumstance its servant.

It is not by any means only materialists and necessitarians that have denied the freedom of the will. Christian thinkers have sometimes reached what is practically the same conclusion. Calvinism in its disproportionate emphasis on Divine omnipotence would seem to make God responsible for all human actions, both good and evil, and by insisting so strongly on His power and knowledge deny moral responsibility in men. No doubt there is a truth in the view that all things must serve God's will and that His sovereignty must be vindicated. In the end

man's will must be subject to the Divine Will. But much depends on whether we conceive of God's purpose as pursuing its way independently of man's moral life and determining his destiny by its own fiat, independently of human deserts, or hold that God uses His power to give men grace to co-operate with Him so that Divine and human Will may be in union. If we believe that He is a God to whom each soul has a personal existence we must look for His aid, because in men's effort to attain the purpose of life they must work in co-operation with His eternal purpose. Only in this way can we believe in man's moral responsibility and his power to make his will correspondent to the Will of God.

The highest act of the will is the deliberate attempt to co-operate with the Divine Will. That is the true aim of man's life. Christianity insists that the Will of God may be known to men, and in a variety of forms it declares what that will is for mankind both collectively and individually. Always it is the will of perfect love, and it is just because such is its character a man can never accomplish it except by the free, responsive co-operation of his will with the Divine Will. The omnipotence of God and the freedom of man are realities if not in logic certainly in life, if not in theory certainly in experience. We must be con-

tent to recognize the facts though we are unable to bind them into a satisfactory theory. There are antinomies which baffle our systems, but which we may not ignore.

The reader of the Gospel must be aware that Christ always acts in a way to evoke the hidden or dormant powers of man's will. If, on the one hand, He never uses compulsion, on the other, He never saves men moral effort. As He refused to summon the celestial legions to destroy His enemies united only in their common enmity against Himself, so He would not compel Judas to fidelity nor prevent his apostasy. Read the Gospel narratives and notice how the Master with all the resourcefulness of love's insight appeals, warns, challenges men if by any means He can rouse their will to follow the good, the true, and the beautiful. The law of His own life was to do the Father's Will, by freely conforming His own will to the purpose of omnipotent love, and this must be the law of obedience for all.

In all moral progress there must be a real effort of the will, with its full employment of our whole manhood in its determination to achieve righteousness and truth. Yet Christianity declares that even this is not all. Grace is its watchword, the gift of Divine life, its characteristic endowment. The Spirit of God is within man, not to work

instead of his will, but to rouse it to responsive activity. This truth frequently finds expression in the Church's worship. Especially is this found in times of perplexity, when men are most puzzled to know what is true and weakened in their power to attain it. So in the ancient liturgy when the days are dark with anticipation of mid-winter, men used the words of the ancient collect appointed for the Sunday next before Advent :—

Excita, quæsumus, Domine, Tuorum fidelium voluntates: ut divini operis fructum propensius exequentes, pietatis Tuæ remedia majora percipiant. Per Dominum nostrum.

VII

SELF-LOVE

MODERN moralists and preachers rarely recommend the duty of self-love. In the eighteenth century it was a constant theme, but since that time the term has found little favour. Some writers in its stead say much about self-realization, but that also has been judged unsatisfactory if only because it is too ambiguous to provide a clear moral ideal. Perhaps we may return to the older term and consider what is implied in it.

Butler pointed out that true self-love is the action of a man's whole manhood reflecting upon itself, its interests or happiness, and while not failing to regard his relation to others, but rather having entire good will to them, yet going on by discipline to the perfection of his powers. Coleridge asserts that the unselfishness of self-love in the hopes and fears of religion consists in the necessity of moral energy in the development of character and the clear recognition that we have to look forward to a future life. Some modern

psychologists, however, make the term stand for the self-regarding sentiment of the thoroughly selfish man, separating self-love from self-respect. But we may urge that this division need not exist.

When we are bidden to love our neighbour as ourselves, it must be because the self-love of which the injunction speaks is never merely self-regarding. No man can be his true self in all its manifold life apart from his fellowship with others and the demands it imposes on him. The ethics of the Gospels have in view an ideal for each believer, and trusting in the Master the disciples find the power to reach towards it. But they learnt that the full discharge of their duty to themselves implied that they must so act as to help others to attain that for which they were striving after in their own lives. True self-love embraces others, because it is centred in God. And His love for men issues from His knowledge, not merely of what they are, but of what they may become. It is the interpretative insight of true self-love which refuses to despair either of oneself or of others.

Self-love implies a recognition of all that personality comprises, all that it may become, all that it has to do. It must, therefore, have a high place in personal religion. It is a commonplace that men are often ignorant of themselves.

To arrive at that self-knowledge which is the first necessity for self-love, we must deliberately offer ourselves to the tests of truth, goodness, and service which for a Christian means we must judge ourselves in the light of the revelation of Christ.

He is no less a revealer of man than He is a revealer of God. He could not be the one unless He were the other. The Gospels show us how in finding the Master men found themselves. Not until that moment when He dealt with them did they know what manner of men they were. The woman of Samaria, St Peter, St James, St John, the rich young ruler, the Pharisees, saw themselves for the first time as they came into the presence of that Revealer of men to themselves. He knew what was in man. We must urge men to make their own acquaintance with Him if they would find out the truth of their own character. It may not be a pleasant process, but knowledge like charity must begin at home, and in the quiet reflection of a man with himself in the light of the Eternal the knowledge most worth gaining is acquired. If a man acts according to that knowledge his self-love will help him to his highest happiness.

Just as the man who would keep himself fit in readiness for any call on his physical strength trains his body, noticing where he is weak or un-

developed, avoiding that which slackens, seeking what braces his energies and glorying in the strain of what is difficult, so the spiritual athlete must put himself to a like discipline. Only in this way can he attain a true self-love. For in the spiritual realm there is need for constant energy with all the strength of disciplined character. Temptation is constant in one form or another. We may not be able to account for it and trace it to its source, but experience testifies to its reality, and when a man has learnt the truth about himself he has the secret of moral victory in his keeping. The violence of passion, the seduction of sloth, the glamour of covetousness, the pretension of pride are seen to be alien to his highest interests. Shall a man submit to these and forfeit his life? We may indulge in every degree of selfishness, but that is self-murder and not self-love. Self-love is the condition of confidence in our fight against evil.

Men who attempt to love their neighbour as themselves without the discipline of self-love may be benevolent and energetic, but they must inevitably fail in their efforts to serve others, since they know nothing by direct experience of those moral and spiritual realities which enable us to reach our highest manhood. The pathos of much of what passes for social reform is found in

this fact. Men deal with the conditions of life but neglect the life itself. They think only of present conditions and forget that the self has powers which transcend its fortunes—a life that shall never die. True self-love cannot forget this fact, and it will set the norm of a man's service to his neighbours. Self-love then is at once a motive for a personal righteousness and social service. It is self-regarding only because it would have a man make the best of himself in order that he may render a higher service to God and his fellow-men.

VIII

SELF-REALIZATION

MEN are always in danger of becoming the victims of their own phrases, and it is a duty to examine with special care the meaning of common catch-words. At the present time much is heard of such terms as self-realization, self-expression, and self-development. Directly such terms as these are examined, it is found to be difficult to fix their precise meaning, and not infrequently it would appear that they serve to disguise a moral conception of life that is of extremely doubtful value.

A thoughtful modern writer declares, not without reason, that by the use of the term self-realization a man may commit himself to mere self-contradictory nonsense. It is impossible to secure the full activity of all our capacities, because some of them must needs be restrained or sacrificed for the sake of others. No true self-realization can be attained without self-sacrifice, which is exactly what is denied by those who insist always on the right of self-development. The duty of


every one to make the best use of his powers need not be denied, but there is no ground for supposing that this can be secured by the unrestrained activity of every part of his nature. Not only must the lower be sacrificed to the higher, but the claims of society must limit the activities even of much of the highest significance for the individual. Self-realization, therefore, cannot justify the claim to give the rein to every desire, nor does it excuse a disregard of the demands of society. Plainly there are limits to the rights of the self.

Rights and duties cannot properly be dissociated. Man is a social being, and he has obligations to his fellow-men not less important than his claim to be himself. He must learn how to correlate these moral duties to self and others before he can arrive at the true functions of his manhood. No true life is ever achieved by constant thought of oneself. This only leads to eccentricity, to selfishness, or to self-conceit, ending in a poverty of character which weakens life and robs it of some of its highest qualities. It is not to be denied that the duty of self-sacrifice has sometimes been so over-emphasized that it has been regarded as an end in itself, a view which is both irrational and immoral, but without self-sacrifice of some kind men can never hope to attain the highest moral power of which they are

capable. Self-realization cannot be attained without self-sacrifice.

All this, when plainly stated, may be accepted as self-evidently true, but many still claim their liberty to the freest expression of themselves. "Why should I not allow myself the fullest experience of which I am capable, and give the rein to what are the natural functions of my manhood? They are obviously intended for use; why should I hesitate to allow them full freedom of action? Repression is unnatural, it robs men of the right of enjoyment, it limits the exercise of gifts which no one can dispute add a zest to life." There would be more force in such pleas if all our faculties had the same moral value, or if they enabled us in equal degree to make our contribution to the common well-being. It is a matter of experience, however, that the unrestrained exercise of our lower faculties may not only destroy our higher faculties, but also inflict the gravest injury on others whose self has equal rights with our own. In all balanced movement there must somewhere be limitation or restraint.

But even the most thoughtful self-discipline cannot alone secure our fullest manhood. Something more than obedience to rules is required for our true development, for this, too, may express mere self-regard, which is at bottom selfishness,



though it be never so refined. The truth is, that we never "find" ourselves until we lose ourselves in something or some one higher or nobler than ourselves and the community in which we live. The Master announced this fact, and offered a motive to give it full force in our lives by His ever-memorable challenge: "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

Christ no more sanctions self-sacrifice for its own sake than does the most eager exponent of ethical hedonism. It is to be "for My sake." Undoubtedly this demand excites our criticism. That is inevitable, and it is welcomed. But our criticism must be made in good faith, which is another way of saying that he who frames it must make an earnest endeavour to test the validity of the claim he questions by a frank trial of the way in which it works. For this purpose his endeavour must be not only to act as Christ acted in the world, but to identify himself with the aims and motives which controlled the Master's life. He will talk neither of self-realization nor of self-sacrifice. He will give himself to loyal service, to goodness and truth, to find his powers attain their highest functions, while his usefulness to the community will be immensely increased in range and energy. He will acquire the true

harmony of his faculties of spirit, soul and body, so that with character disciplined he reaches his fullest powers graced by a beauty and joy which is his manhood's crown.

In this self-realization, which is the true development of moral character, we may not shirk the common burdens of life. Sometimes a man may be justified in leaving the arena of the world, but for most of us our duty is to face the contest and never flinch from it, though we must bear the marks of the struggle to the end and leave the fruits of our victory for the enjoyment of others. We may lose much that we would keep, but we gain more than full compensation in the attainment of that higher manhood which comes to those who have done their duty in scorn of pleasure and have won the satisfaction of loyalty to the highest. The worth of character is not to be judged by variety of experience, but by fidelity to truth and duty.

IX

JUDGING OTHERS

IF we would contribute to the brotherhood of men we must make the best of them. Nothing so certainly destroys fellowship as the critical temper. We need not ignore our differences and the amazing contrasts which exist in men's characters, desires, and circumstances, for it is only as we have these in our minds that we can hope to make our contribution towards the general welfare, but this is no justification for passing moral judgments on our fellows.

We are in danger of forgetting the mystery of personality. Modern psychology encourages us in the analytical study of human nature, and current fiction gives a zest to it which tempts many to an almost morbid habit of judging our neighbour's motives and dissecting his character. But we may easily suppose that our knowledge of human nature is greater than it really is. Personality is always complex and contains depths of life which we can never really understand.

Our rough and ready classification of the people with whom we have to do as good or bad is rarely true and can never be justified. The saint has his imperfections and the sinner his excellences.

The employment of our critical faculties to find the faults of others is a lower exercise of the mind than the search for that which is good in them. It is an easy task to discover the failings of even the best men, but that may be because their imperfections are more congruous to our own characters than their virtues. We are quickest to perceive in others those vices of which we ourselves are guilty, and for this reason it will be found that those who have the lowest estimate of their fellows are themselves coarse-grained, hard-hearted, or vicious. Their habit of condemnation serves as an encouragement of their own perversity. Why should they try to attain a higher moral standard when they hold that every one they meet has so little of that which is good? Thus the critical temper ministers to the self-conceit of him who indulges in it and proves fatal to charity and comradeship. Censoriousness easily creates what it condemns, and he who indulges in this vice finds the evil he looks for, it may be in other men, but it will certainly also be in himself.

It is impossible to estimate the harm done by

the facile criticism of prejudice shaken in its self-conceit. Consider the judgments that were passed on him whom we now regard as the Pattern of our manhood, the embodiment of moral perfection. Some condemned him as a political adventurer seeking his own dominance over the nation ; others blamed him for his cowardice in not seizing the opportunity of making himself king. Some judged him to be impious in his claim of fellowship with God whose will he declared he always fulfilled ; others called him shameless, not because he made so high a claim, but because he was content to associate himself with those whom they judged accursed by God. Finally, they all condemned him to death as morally worthless. It was the only judgment about which they were unanimous, and it was their most complete self-condemnation.

What we know about ourselves might be considered a sufficient ground for our abstention from judging others. Consider the secrets in the life of any man : the hidden acts, the mixed motives, the dark thoughts, the recognized mean-nesses of conduct which have their place in any true record of his life. He knows that they are real and that they are part of what he is. If he saw these things in a neighbour he would most likely feel compelled to condemn him and justify

the verdict as a righteous judgment. But he also is aware that together with all that is unworthy in himself there is much that is good, desires for what is true and pure, acts of disinterested service to others, qualities of undoubted moral nobility. These he holds save him from condemnation as evil. Why, then, should he not give another credit for similar reserves of virtue? No criticism which neglects them can be true. Plainly it becomes a thoughtful and sincere man to refrain from the judgment of his fellows, and so to discipline his heart and mind that they forbid the tongue to frame judgments which may be entirely false and at best can be only partially true.

Many writers have described Calvin's censoriousness and traced it to his lack of grace in his dealings with his fellows and the limited sphere of his influence in the lives of his associates. Many good men have failed through their failure to refrain from the criticism of others. Few things show more wisdom and are more worthy of a great evangelist than Wesley's resolution to abstain from finding fault with his Moravian friends. He wrote a letter to them condemning what he supposed was their subservience to their leader, their pride in their Church, their guile and dissimulation in many cases, their "close,

dark, reserved temper and behaviour.” But before the letter was finished he determined to wait a little longer—long enough to allow him time for reflection—and the letter was never sent. Friendliness and censoriousness are ill companions, and they soon separate, the first wounded for life, the other rioting in its malign pride.

God makes the best of people. It is our happiness to know that the only judgment that finally prevails is with Him. Being such as we are we may well tremble before His tribunal, but the All-knowing is the All-loving, and He is righteous enough to be All-merciful.

X

SUSPICION

THE things of the spirit control men even when they seem intent on little more than material satisfactions. Spiritual forces are as varied as the powers of nature, and they do not always make for truth, fellowship, or joy. The principalities and powers to which St Paul referred may be evil, so that men may be controlled by spiritual agencies to their undoing as well as by those who bring them infinite gain.

Of all evil the spirit of suspicion is the most baneful and the most prevalent. It works harm almost everywhere, withers the finest flowers of man's ideals, shrivels hope and destroys the warmth of our common humanity. "The singular empire of suspicion" exists where it is least recognized, and its influence is apparent in the sinister faculty with which men invent reasons for shirking obvious duty, justifying covetousness or indulgence in their lowest passions. Nothing true and generous can live in the atmosphere of suspicion.

Family life, industrial efficiency, national well-being are its victims. In all the grim pictures drawn by Carlyle in his "History of the French Revolution," few are so striking in its plain veracity as his description of suspicion's baneful influence. It was the source of all that strange riot in which men forgot that they were human and acted like untamed beasts, rending each other with every accompaniment of treachery or violence. It did not cease its dark work even when those who were its victims had obtained the mastery, for then they began to suspect each other, and at last to suspect themselves. Camille Desmoulins, we are told, though one of the clearest heads in France, had become so saturated through every fibre with the pre-naturalism of suspicion that when thousands rose around him yelling responsive cries to his words he found it explicable only on the hypothesis that they were all hired to do it. But he does not stop there. He goes on, driven by the last cunning flick of suspicion, to doubt his own sincerity. "Almost I conjecture that I myself am a plot, and wooden with wires."

The root cause of the present discontent is suspicion. Our industrial troubles may be traced to it. If we could once destroy its power, there can be little doubt that the bitterness which mars

our common life would vanish as the mists and chills of an unwholesome morning vanish before the glow of the midday sun. Employers and employed would no longer prepare in separate camps to carry on a war which rages everywhere. The imputation of unworthy motives which flouts every hope of fellowship before it can give birth to a better order would vanish, and men would begin to see each other as destined to enjoy a common life in the freedom of their manhood's rights.

Nothing is so easily caused and increased as suspicion. It is created by a hint, a gesture, a single phrase. Not infrequently it springs out of a silence which may be a perversion of truth more sinister in its results than the most embittered speech. It flatters envy and gives ignorance its self-justification. Men can create suspicion when they are unfit for anything else, and acquire a reputation for acuteness by this artifice of evil when otherwise they would be powerless. Credulity and incredulity combine to bring to birth this monstrous spectre till it acquires an ever-increasing malignancy. A vile breed is its offspring, cowardly yet cunning, inventive yet obtuse, defiling the very sources of life by the foulness of their deceit.

If we would destroy suspicion and free ourselves

from its disabling and blighting influence, we must come into close contact with our fellows and seek a true knowledge tested by experience of the real difficulties and temptations which beset them. We must refuse to invent fears and give no encouragement to the disabling occupation of attributing motives to those whose actions we may not be able to understand. Knowledge is that true antidote to suspicion. For this reason men of different order in their social and industrial life must seek opportunities of friendly intercourse and meet each other face to face, frankly making known the facts of their common enterprise.

If we must examine motives it will be sufficient to examine our own. Who shall deny that it is because we are conscious of some unworthiness in ourselves that we are so quick to impute unworthiness to others? The evil man is quickest to discern evil in his fellow-men, and finds in this task a specious self-excuse of practices which conscience cannot condone, but which is defended by pleas that only suspicion can justify. We need to rule our own lives by a watchful self-discipline. We must hold before ourselves and others the ideal to which all may aspire, hoping that in a common aim to attain it suspicion will die down and true fellowship take its place. To

get the best out of people we must believe the best that is already theirs, persuaded that in emulation in a common work to promote a larger fellowship of mutual service in the building up of the Kingdom of God suspicion will give place to a confident fraternity.

And oft, though Wisdom wake, Suspicion sleeps
At Wisdom's gate, and to Simplicity
Resigns her charge, while Goodness thinks no ill
Where no ill seems.

XI

CONSISTENCY

THE duty of examining the worth of what we accept as our moral standards is of urgent importance in view of the swift changes that are taking place in religious, social and industrial life. Men can easily be guilty of inconsistency, not because they are evilly disposed, but either through sheer bewilderment about the right course to be adopted, or through the carelessness which inevitably results from a failure to grasp the paramount importance of living in the light of true principles.

There are some virtues whose true contents are commonly misunderstood, so that a man may suppose that they are his when in fact he habitually ignores them. But few men, whatever their faults may be, would not claim to be consistent. They recognize that consistency is necessary for self-respect, yet it cannot be assumed that they possess this virtue until they have taken care to examine its character and understand clearly

what it implies. For what we call consistency may be mere obstinacy, and this is a very different thing. Consistency is the harmony of personality acting according to principles founded on permanent moral sanctions. Obstinacy, on the other hand, is persistence unsupported by reason, and in neglect of the full range of a man's duty. Consistency implies harmony and proportion in faith and conduct ; obstinacy springs from disproportion in moral perception and of self-will.

Not infrequently it is consistency that leads a man to change his opinions or alter his course of action. What others regard as the proof of instability may, after all, be the result of his steadfast determination to rule life by the highest conceptions of duty known to him. For it is certain that when we are resolved to follow at any cost the highest standards of moral life we gradually attain a clearer conception of their demands, and because we grow in the clearness of our vision we must needs abandon not only former opinions, but actions, and thus appear inconsistent. Our apparent inconsistency is in reality the result of our determination to keep ourselves true to the highest we have learnt. We shall see this all the better if we remind ourselves of the difference between opinions and convictions. Opinions are concerned with some-

thing less than what is certain. They are at best estimates of probabilities, for though we may hold them in various degrees of confidence, they must always be open to revision or rejection in the light of clearer knowledge. But convictions spring from the decision of the whole man in view of what he is persuaded are permanent laws of life, with their eternal distinction between truth and falsehood, good and evil. Convictions may in time alter their expression, but they cannot change their authority except under the urgency of an entirely new conception of truth. This does not happen to every man, and when it does it must alter the fashion of a man's life, but there is no real inconsistency on that account. The change is due to the old fidelity to the highest that has been revealed.

Consistency, then, implies conviction and loyal determination to follow the light as it appears. It was Bentham who declared that consistency was the rarest of all human virtues. We may doubt whether it could ever be attained by his rules, and perhaps he himself recognized this difficulty, but we may adopt his dictum and account for the rarity of consistency by the prevalent lack of conviction. We are readier to trust to what appears expediency rather than trust ourselves to truth and right ; to be opportunists

rather than be embarrassed by insistent moral claims. Here is the root of our inconsistency, and the reason why so often we dissipate our time and strength on trifles and ignore the majesty of the Divine Will.

Clearly, then, consistency is a necessary element in the religious life. Here we are dealing neither with opinions nor with policies, but with convictions as they are based on the realities of faith. If once a man gives himself entirely to what he apprehends to be immutable truth, his life will be fashioned and controlled by it. He will see clearly the path before him and press forward without doubt or misgiving. All that he is will be controlled by his convictions and his consistency will be assured. That he will gain in simplicity of life, clearness of purpose, and moral influence is evident. Saved from the dissipation of thought and energy, which afflicts those who are without the guidance of a religion clearly apprehended and loyally followed, his life gains a strength which will withstand alike the passing fashions of the world or the temptations of self-interest.

It may be urged that a man may be consistently evil. It must be confessed there are some who seem to be so entirely controlled by what is false and evil that their lives form one malignant

tragedy. But evil has no law and allows no settled convictions. A man who gives himself to its power may be obstinate, but he can never be consistent. Neither can a man attain this virtue so long as he rules his life by the conventions of the society in which he moves. They may help him to avoid grave breaches of morals, but they affect only what is external, and do not shape the depth of character. In religion this is obvious enough. Convention in religion is the enemy of consistency. It is not every one who cries, "Lord, Lord," who enters into the Kingdom of Heaven. We must bring our action into harmony with our words till life is a unity, motive, thought, affection, and will working together under the dominance of faith's decision, bound together in that harmony of manhood which a man attains who knows the Will of God and is content to do it to the uttermost of his powers.

XII

MODERATION

MODERATION is a virtue dressed in homespun. It seems so unheroic that we sometimes wonder whether it may not be a vice. The Greeks thought of it highly, but the Romans gave it scarcely anything more than their contempt. Men still hesitate in their judgment of its value. Is it merely self-denying caution against the risk of suffering or danger : a feeble withdrawal from the struggle between good and evil? Virtue, we say, must have something venturesome in it, and of this we find no trace in moderation.

We know how moderation has been claimed by men who were more anxious to secure their own safety than to struggle for the right, being content to comply with moral standards shaped by public opinion rather than to stand against its tyranny. But pugnacity is not always reasonable, and contention may be a sign of partial apprehension of the truth. It is the man who has probed deep into the mystery of

life and knows most clearly his own limitations who pursues the middle path, not because it is the safest, but because he knows that fidelity to it will carry him farthest to life's ideal. Aristotle's doctrine of the mean is not for cowards or for the indifferent. It requires conviction, tolerance, patience, and sympathy. These are no mean virtues, and all are required for true moderation.

Readers of Dean Swift will remember how he declares that a moderate man is often understood to be one to whom all religion is indifferent, moderation being the coward's refuge under the frown of power. The eighteenth century's ideal of moderation in religion will scarcely satisfy us to-day, yet it will at least help us to guard against a common error which is only too prevalent among us at the present time. Party spirit can know nothing of moderation, for it recognizes no doctrine of the mean. It is always extreme. Only by emphasizing the pre-eminent value of its own theories and policy can it justify its existence or maintain its vigour. The reflection that perhaps other people may see the truth more clearly than themselves, and are adopting a wiser course than their own would at once destroy their eagerness. Moderation is the temper of the man who not only sees two sides to a question, but has found the roots of faith so

deep that he is indifferent to the storms which touch little more than its surface. He is less concerned with theories than with life, less anxious to promote causes than to acquit himself honourably without fuss, less eager to denounce error than to live according to the truth.

Perhaps moderation is so lightly esteemed because it is often made the plea of the selfish and inert. But in its true nature it is strong, calm, earnest, and far-seeing. It is the achievement of confident faith, and cannot exist where there is fear, which is the enemy of all social harmony and individual well-being. He who practises moderation has learned that after all the greater matters of life and death, good and evil, success and failure are not in men's hands, but under the control of One who is patient because He is eternal. Moderation must be distinguished from a readiness to compromise with goodness and truth. It is rather the mark of the sober mind who sees them both in their myriad forms and activities. He would achieve the highest with fixed resolution, but he is careful not to take any part for the whole.

Moralists, not without reason, have drawn a distinction between temperance and moderation. The first, according to Aquinas, is concerned with strong passion ; the second has to do with less

vehement feeling. Temperance may be of various degrees of rigour, for it must be determined by the character and circumstances of its subject, sometimes being stern, and demanding self-renunciation in a high degree. On the other hand, moderation comes through a man's reflective exercise of liberty, by which he secures his own self-mastery, so that by avoiding prejudice, ambition, conceit, and passion he achieves that quiet ordering of life which is often the truest heroism, though it may make no stir in the world.

The moderate man in religion has rarely secured his due deserts in the judgment of his contemporaries. Too often he has been identified with the Laodicæan. But this is a confusion. It is true that in religion a man must exercise the whole of his powers with complete self-dedication. Compromise here is disaster. But it may be maintained that only when a man believes with all his heart does he become a moderate man in the truest sense of the term. He is so entirely devoted to the service of God, so certain that discipleship is his privilege, and so conscious of the joy of faith that he remains undisturbed by the controversies and conflicts which too often are but the evidence of uncertainty or fear.

Moderation, in the sense which we have used

the term, is the expression of faith's confidence, the sense of proportion which comes from the larger vision of the Divine goodness and the recognition that a man's knowledge of God's will can be but partial only. It prevents short views, avoids controversies, and recognizes that truth is larger than our measures. Yet it is never apathetic, for while it cares nothing either for compromise or sectional advantage, it relies on the reality of the supernatural order and rests with conviction, steadied by experience, on the righteousness and mercy of God.

XIII

OBEDIENCE

WHAT may be to one age a moral ideal to another will seem almost a degradation. Men of one generation will practise or condone conduct which to their successors seems opposed to the plainest moral standards. Yet virtues and vice do not change. Truth, courage, justice, temperance remain, and their claims cannot be abrogated. They do not depend on man's will.

It is inevitable that in the changing circumstances of men's fortunes different virtues should seem to be most necessary or most honourable. The history of morals shows how a community while accepting the highest ethical ideals in some relations of life may deliberately reject others equally important as undesirable or pernicious. At the present time, while the thoughtful student of contemporary morality may come to the conclusion that the general standard is improving, there is a marked relapse in some respects. This is seen, among other ways, in the widespread

disposition to doubt whether, after all, obedience is to be recognized as a duty. It is significant that so many modern writers of ethics almost ignore it, while others who give it a place in morals are so conscious of the dangers which attend its practice that they minimize its scope.

In their zeal to vindicate the right of self-determination men reject the notion of submission to any exterior authority. Freedom is their watchword, and they cannot find a place for obedience in their schemes of moral values. In an interesting passage William James confesses that it was to him something of a mystery that men possessed of an inner life of their own could ever come to think that subjection of their will to that of other finite creatures is recommendable. He adds, "Yet it evidently corresponds to a profound interior need of many persons, and we must do our best to understand it." There have been strange perversions in this matter, but these do not justify reaction.

So strong is the dislike of insistence on the need of obedience that even children, it is declared, must be free to follow their own desires. No one, it is urged, has a right to influence them in such a way as to deprive them of absolute freedom of self-determination. But if a child is to learn anything he must first have confidence in his

instructors, whose commands he must obey even when he cannot understand their full significance. There can be no moral growth without obedience, just as there can be no intellectual advance without the exercise of memory, for, to accept a dictum of a psychologist of the older school, "with the child there is one measure of talent, and that is memory, but one measure of morality, and that is obedience." It is a false pedagogy which in the interests of reason and freedom denies the value of either memory or obedience, but neither knowledge nor liberty can exist until the mind is stored with facts accepted on authority, and the will is disciplined by obedience to others.

There is need of submission to authority, not merely because no community can continue where this is absent, but no individual can reach his full powers without a disciplined conformity of his will to a will higher than his own. The interior authority of his own moral consciousness, together with the exterior authority of law, human and divine, cannot be ignored. He must obey them as the price of freedom. For the Christian the law of Christ is clear and comprehensive, and it is framed in imperatives. The Master commands, and those who would be His disciples must obey. There is no other way. He does not

submit himself to man's suffrages, or wait on their favour. He comes as Master and Lord, and He claims absolute obedience to His will. The injunction of His Mother at the marriage feast at Cana remains a permanent law of the Christian's life—"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

If obedience comes first, it remains to the last, but it gradually changes in its expression and its quality. Beginning by compliance to law, because it is the sequel of repentance and faith, it becomes the expression of love. The first act of discipleship is submission to a will higher than our own, but gradually obedience produces a harmony of inner desire and outward command, so that, though obedience is still necessary, it is no longer of the letter, but of the spirit ; no longer rendered to a law or a system, but to the loving will of one whom experience has proved to be infinitely wiser than ourselves.

In one of the Yearly Meeting epistles issued by the Society of Friends there is a fine appeal to its members to "render obedience to the Divine Presence." Such obedience brings with it the gradual remoulding of character, the upbuilding of life by life. It demands every gift, every thought, every desire, every hope, every effort. All lesser obligations find their place in this homage to the Presence. Here the conflicts of

moral duties are reconciled, mercy and justice are at one, and indolence, timidity, and fear are banished by the spirit of confident sonship. Obedience is the expression of love for One whose service is perfect freedom.

XIV

COMPENSATION

It is impossible to judge the degree of happiness enjoyed by any man. Some who might be supposed to be entirely unfortunate give proof of constant and unaffected cheerfulness, while others whose lives seem dowered by everything calculated to ensure their contentment are filled with gloom. It is clear that happiness is independent of circumstance.

The law of compensation is found in operation throughout Nature and includes man's life in its circle. It affects not only his conditions, but himself in body and soul. It is a fact of common observation that a blind man acquires a keener sense of hearing and of touch than that possessed by his neighbours who see. Deficiencies in one direction are compensated by special gifts in another, so that men are able in spite of what might seem disabling afflictions to meet the stress of life with confidence, and not seldom with a happiness to themselves and others in

spite of what might be judged to be overwhelming misfortune.

Few have not known some person whose life has been marred, as we judge it, by prolonged suffering. With body and mind wracked by pain life for them throbs with agony. We count them among the objects of our pity, and take for granted that their life is a long-drawn misery. But those who know them best often hear them say that they would not have life otherwise. They have learnt a great secret, for passing beyond the glare and noise of the world they enjoy mysterious consolations, strange compensatory experiences in the furnace of affliction, bringing them victory in submission, spiritual vitality in the loss of physical power, joy in suffering. We can have no doubt that in the balance of life the gain is with them, and the strange influence they exercise calls out our homage:—

The man that hath great griefs I pity not ;
'Tis something to be great
In any wise, and hint the larger state,
Though but in shadow of a shade, God wot !

To him the sorrows are the tension-thrills
Of that serene endeavour,
Which yields to God for ever and for ever
The joy that is more ancient than the hills.

We are as different from each other in our

moral attainments as in our physical or mental powers. Does the law of compensation work in the moral sphere? We can have no doubt that it does. Men of real virtue often bring shame and confusion on themselves and on others through some grave defect of character which they seem unable to overcome. Yet while they retain moral energy they may not only recover, but gain a higher experience than could otherwise have been theirs, and make amends for their former failure. Forgiveness not only issues in the power to overcome sin, but makes what was the source of a man's degradation the medium of new heights of virtue and new activities of beneficent service to his fellows. We cannot say that he will be a better man because of his former vice, for innocence has its own grace, which though gentle, is mighty with an invincibility all its own, but the penitent has his own office of sympathy with sinners, and the knowledge that forgiveness endows men with redemptive energy. Such men as these have proved among the most mighty forces in the spiritual history of mankind. They have made true compensation to others.

These considerations, we think, ought to have a larger influence than they obtain to-day. Many good men are losing much of their influence through a despondent judgment on themselves.

Conscious of their own imperfections, recognizing the weakness of their own character, and their failure, in spite of their efforts, to attain the virtues which they know they lack, they are disposed to sink into a pessimistic acquiescence in their own weakness and to look on difficulties which confront those who would extend the Kingdom of God as insuperable. They need to bear in mind the wide activity of the law of compensation. Whatever may be their weakness, if they would remember that a man's fidelity to recognized duty brings its own reward both to himself and to others, and that knowledge of failure put to good account may be the most profitable of moral forces, they would find that the law of compensation gives them new strength and usefulness. They would also attain that strong and quiet happiness which is based on the assurance that this puzzling world has its meaning and that what is most painful can issue in the highest happiness.

This law is seen most clearly in Him who is known to all the world as the Man of Sorrows. Life was hard for Him from His birth in poverty to His death on the Cross. But He was more than content to bear what came to Him of pain in heart and mind because He knew that His reward was sure. He found compensation in

the results of His Passion in Himself and others. The apostolic writer does not hesitate to declare that Christ learnt obedience by the things He suffered, that is, He acquired in experience the meaning of compliance with the Divine Will, that could not have been His in any other way than through the bitterness of His Passion. And the compensation was also found in the results of His death in the lives of others. The fruit of the Cross is redeemed mankind. The fruit of the suffering of Christ is the salvation of the world. He looked at the result and was satisfied.

XV

FAITHFUL FAILURE

A COURAGEOUS man with spiritual vision has his own interpretation of experience. It is not that he easily frames his judgments or is saved from perplexity. Like other men, he finds that he cannot move forward to discharge his duties without the sense of stress and the consciousness of frequent failure. But he differs from them in making his very failures the means to higher success.

Failure is an inevitable experience, and it is felt most acutely by those who in the moral and spiritual sphere are judged to be most successful. Their ideals and their standards of endeavour are on a higher plane than their neighbours'. It is true that they succeed where others fail, but none the less they are conscious of the wide divergence between their hopes and their achievements. Those who are not affected by these high ambitions share the sense of failure. We are all one in this experience. Our differences are seen

in the way in which we meet it. Some make failure the starting-point for fresh endeavour. Others rebel against it, and become so confused that every effort they make only adds to their defeat. Others consent to failure, and live in sheer hopelessness.

It is obvious that failure in a high moral aim has a nobler quality than success in what is lower. Indeed, success may be the worst of all failures. If we never aim at more than the prizes of the world—money, reputation, pleasure—we may attain much beyond that which we hope for, but the result will be disillusion and satiety. When men make these things the sole object of life, and succeed in it, in the end they will be cheated by the toys for which they have bartered life's highest gifts. Our moral worth is determined by what we really work for, the ideals we strive to attain.

When a man endeavours to move forward to a higher moral life, though failure constantly be his fortune, it will not leave him hopeless. Failure challenges him to new efforts. He will never lower his ideal nor make a truce with anything less than perfection. His disappointments will not be attributed to untoward circumstances. These set the conditions of his life, and like a true player he will conform to the rules, for he

knows that what he is and what he attempts is more important than what he achieves. One encouragement is always his, for the attempt to move forward has its own joy. His strength of will grows by what must destroy a less vigilant combatant, till the very struggle brings him a happiness which success in achieving anything less can never give men.

There are many who excuse their acquiescence in defeat by the nature of the circumstances in which they live or the special elements of their own character. They attribute to heredity, physical constitution, or mental power a force which makes success for them impossible. They do not deny the existence and worth of the ideal, but they plead that, being such men as they are, they cannot hope to attain it, and that therefore the attempt to secure it is useless. Other people, they plead, suffer under no such disabilities as theirs, whose passions or weakness prevent the success which may be easily achieved by others less weighted than themselves. But this acquiescence in failure is never justified. Its cause is moral obtuseness, laziness, pride, or self-pity. No one is absolved from the struggle after moral improvement, and every one, if he will only exercise his will, is able to move forward, if only a little, to a higher level of achievement.

Let a man stand up and confront the most adverse circumstances and the most bitter misfortune, and, though conscious of innate weakness, he will find success even in his failure.

To our failure in moral progress there may be added our failure in our duty to others. Here we may have to recognize that opportunity of service is no longer ours. He to whom we ought to have given help or shown forbearance is now beyond our ministry. The mysterious spaces of death divide us, and we can never hope by any effort to make good what should have been done in the past. Such failure has its own bitterness, and those who taste it know its anguish, but even here there is no place for remorse or hopelessness. The Apostle who, having betrayed his Friend, went out into the night in an agony of self-accusation heard in the early dawn of a later day the word of absolution, with its call to serve his fellows as those with whom his Master was identified. Opportunities misused cannot return, but in their place we find others the legatees of those whom we failed to serve in the past.

"Our business in this world," wrote R. L. Stevenson, "is not to succeed, but to continue to fail in good spirits." He would have men write as his epitaph, "Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, failed much," and "There goes

another Faithful Failure." So long as there is no lack of will to move forward, so long as men face their duty with disciplined purpose, and refuse to be discouraged, their failures cannot hold them fast. No discouragement can be final, no defeat can rob us of ultimate victory. We fall to rise again; we still press to that nobler manhood which is the Divine purpose for each of us.

XVI

MORAL RECOVERY

ONE of the mysteries of life is the strange difference in men's spiritual gifts. Inequalities in physical or intellectual powers, however puzzling, cannot concern men for more than the brief span of life in this world. But if, as we believe, there is a life hereafter, the inequalities in men's spiritual powers have a significance of the highest importance.

Some men, it would appear, have little power of spiritual apprehension. The realities of faith have no existence for them. Though brought up in the Christian Church, the facts on which Christianity is based have no place in their lives and little meaning to their minds. On the other hand, there are those who have had but little instruction in the faith of the gospel to whom the realities of the unseen world are more real than the things they see and handle. They possess a keen consciousness of the supernatural. These are the spiritually gifted.

But, after all, these differences in spiritual attainments and experience do not determine the real worth of any man's life, for this depends not on what he is, but on what he is becoming. A man's character, by which we understand all that makes up his personality, never stands still in the interaction of its powers and in its response to the world, both material and spiritual, in which he lives. He is making progress or he is degenerating. If our present spiritual condition is low and poor we are called on to improve it by disciplined training. The question is: Are we following the highest we know, exerting our spiritual powers to their full activity, and thus acquiring strength of character and a finer sensibility to what is true, pure and beautiful, or are we becoming grosser in our perception of truth and more easily compliant to evil?

Deterioration is always a possibility, and unless care is exercised it will inevitably take place. It may be not discerned at once, and only after a more or less prolonged period does its influence become obvious, but its baneful work if unchecked is man's undoing.

At first this degeneration in the spiritual life becomes apparent in mere listlessness when confronted with the things of the Spirit and the duties of religion. There may be no refusal,

but there is also no response to the challenge of the unseen world, and a decline in spiritual vitality takes place so gradually that it is unobserved, but its end is a moral atrophy, leaving a man without faith and without hope. This tragedy of deterioration may take place in a man who, when judged by the normal tests of life, must be judged honourable in all his relations to his fellows. It does not usually begin with what is most apparent. Its source is in the secret recesses of a man's being, so that he who would prevent it must examine into the motives, desires, hopes and ideals which control his conduct. Unless we are on our guard against this insidious blight of spiritual apathy, deterioration will surely rob us of life.

Refusal to discharge a duty because it is irksome, failure to follow an ideal through love of money or fear for a reputation, or compromise with conscience, at once easy and damaging, combine to blur a man's vision of the ideal and destroy his spiritual desires. He who refuses to follow the light must walk in darkness, and those who will not move forward on the path of life surely enter the way of death. And because when a man so deteriorates he not only ceases to feel the glow of spiritual aspiration in himself but comes to disbelieve in the possibility of

spiritual life in others, the reality of moral distinctions becomes unreal and the world appears a chill and gloomy prison where guilty men live in mutual suspicion, or a battlefield where they are at constant war with each other.

We are assured that spiritual progress continues after death, and that in the future much that is now imperfect will be made complete. This hope we gladly welcome and accept with confidence. But we must needs face the possibility that degeneration may continue in that life hereafter. The question may be terrifying, but it is well to face it. If progress hereafter is a possibility we cannot neglect the consideration that deterioration may also take place till men die to the spirit in that death which is eternal. If this fate appear too terrible for contemplation we must recognize that every act of contempt of conscience, every act of opposition to that which is spiritual hardens the heart and robs the will of strength, so that the last state of the man is worse than the first.

But though we are differently endowed in our spiritual powers and the problems of faith vary for each of us, every one may progress to a larger life and clearer perception of spiritual realities. Let a man respond to the challenge of conscience, welcome truth, and serve those who

need his help and he will progress on that road of the ascent which brings with it visions of a higher world. His powers of perception will develop, his response to the unseen will grow in eagerness, and he will know the vigour of a new life in himself, a life buoyant with the consciousness of progress. He will still be far from the ideal, but no beatitude can be greater than his who, while conscious that he has not yet attained, presses on toward the goal of his high calling, gaining strength as he proceeds on his way. All else may perish, but this life of the spirit will develop in the ever-ascending triumph of faith.

XVII

SOCIAL SERVICE

DEAN SWIFT was not a divine from whom much guidance in religious matters might be expected, and such sermons of his as are preserved show that he rarely touched the hearts of his hearers. He was content to appeal to men's minds in expounding moral duty, and whether he succeeded in this purpose or not he certainly left no doubt as to the reasonableness of his exhortations. One of his most characteristic sermons, which bears the title "On Mutual Subjection," provides a series of arguments to show that all men, whatever their station may be, are called to render definite services to their fellows, and to do this they must subject themselves to each other.

This is not a popular theme at any time, though in Swift's days preachers constantly emphasized it. To-day it appears to be almost universally avoided. Subjection has an unwelcome sound, the character it suggests is generally disliked or despised, and some would regard it as inconsistent

with our manhood. It is a complaint against the moral teaching of Christianity that it seems to give quite undue prominence to self-abnegation and submission. But men sometimes object to a word while they may commend what it really connotes. We all acknowledge that the highest life is expressed in service, but scarcely adequate thought is given to the spirit in which alone it can be rightly discharged.

Everywhere men and women in many different ways are engaged in promoting schemes of social and industrial improvement. Their energy is evident to all, the policies they expound may be sound, and the results attained considerable. But somehow we are dissatisfied. We cannot avoid the suspicion that the social or religious reformer is apt to look at his fellows as means to the attainment of his policy rather than as ends in themselves. They are expected to accept his theories and comply with his plans for their good independently of their own moral consent. Personality is ignored and the rights of the individual are forgotten. Character is subordinated to circumstance. Animated by these notions, men of this stamp think rather of service as something to be done than as something to be expressed in character. They forget that the highest well-being of the individual and the community is not

secured except by sacrifice, by subjection to the good we would have others share.

The true worth of service is not to be measured by a man's zeal or even by his success in any programme of reform. Something more is required. Everything depends on the spirit which animates him and the measure in which he can inspire others with moral power. Thus here, as everywhere, it is the character of the worker that counts. Only in so far as those engaged in social service exhibit in their own lives the spirit of fellowship, humility, self-surrender, faith, can they bring to men the service which after all men most require. We may bring wealth, pleasure, comfort to men, and no one need affect to despise these things, but there is a service higher than this—the gift of faith, hope, love, the endowments of the spirit which enable men to rise above circumstance, saving them from the arrogance of success and the humiliations of failure by the regal might of a character which is superior to both.

Service designed to satisfy man's true nature always demands self-sacrifice. He whose power springs from what he is renders service of a higher order than one who may be more active but is without the persuasive witness of character. Are we not in constant danger of forgetting this

fact, which, though too often neglected, is self-evident when once it is stated? There are men of conspicuous intellectual ability and resource whose service is spoiled by arrogance and who only incite discontent or suspicion. Others of untiring zeal and fervour have met with overwhelming disillusion in their impatient attempts to satisfy men by pleasant conditions, leaving them without the moral power to enjoy what they have won. Where nothing of true life is pledged in service, so nothing of man's true welfare is gained.

The best social service inspires the vague wishes of men so that they become great convictions and the murmurs of hopeless discontent attain the splendid energies of a new life. Those who recognize this fact are less concerned about possessions than about the possessor; they do not seek satisfaction in what a man may have but in what he is and may become. They are not the less active on that account, but they are never fussy or strident. They are never merely pious, for they recognize the value of self-sacrificing work. No one would be more ready than they are to endorse the aphorism of R. L. Stevenson: "The man who has only been pious and not useful will stand with a long face on that great day when Christ puts to him His questions." But what they have

achieved has been done by supreme moral worth of character. Those who have rendered this ministry of character are the truest servants of their fellows. They have the grace of self-surrender. They have not stooped to conquer, but they have conquered because they have revered God, and man created in His image.

XVIII

CONDITION OF SERVICE

A CONTRAST is often drawn between the contemplative and the active life in religion. The first leads to withdrawal from the world, so that being rid of all evil desire and undistracted by exterior claims men may attain the vision of God. The second calls men to live in the world, meeting all its demands with courage, and so makes them ministrant to our highest welfare. This distinction between the contemplative and the active life is often made by those who consider the contemplative life to be the higher, though it is acknowledged that a state of perfection will find scope for the full activity of both.

The great majority of men cannot make their choice between these two modes of life. It is plainly their appointed duty to remain in the world. They may not withdraw from it. Action for them is the language of life. But even the most energetic man must cultivate a spirit of detachment if he would see life in its true pro-

portion. If he can never allow himself to stand, so to speak, at a distance from the scenes in which he habitually moves, to look at the things for which he spends his life as they appear to an impartial and wise spectator, he will never recognize what he is really achieving in the world and what he is meanwhile making of himself.

There is a detachment from human affairs which is the arrogant indulgence of men full of contempt for their fellows and without hope for the world's improvement. Such men hold themselves aloof from their neighbours only that they may mock at the efforts of those whose burdens they refuse to share. A man of this sort thinks only of himself, and has no mind for anything but his own interests. The joys and sorrows, the failures and successes of others have no meaning for him. He is detached from the world because he is absorbed in himself. But the detachment which gives a true estimate of life's purpose and a closer understanding of its moral significance, shows to us the eternal principles which should guide men and what the Divine Will would accomplish by their means. This detachment never makes a man content merely to mark what is imperfect, foolish, or perverse, but drives him in the light of the vision of what ought to be attempted to the endeavour to attain it.

All the masters of the spiritual life insist on the importance of occasions for withdrawal from the world. Every Sunday provides an opportunity for detachment from the strain of week-day work. Lent is designed to be a season of withdrawal from the rush of the world to ensure some contemplation of the things of the spirit. Retreats for the deepening of the spiritual life are becoming common, and are increasingly appreciated by all classes. They afford men and women opportunities of putting aside their customary occupations and giving their minds to the contemplation of those realities of the spirit which we so habitually neglect that it becomes easy to persuade ourselves that they do not exist. Some find inspiration in these combined endeavours to gain fresh visions of life's meaning and possibilities. Others prefer to be alone so that in solitude they may come to grips with reality. But the important matter is that men should seek some time of detachment from the ordinary affairs of life as a preparation for renewed service.

Contemplation must be a preparation for something to be done. We cannot always be in the sanctuary. We must go to the market-place. Yet the spirit of detachment may still be ours in the noisiest occasions. Retaining its power we shall not be bemused by the tinsel toys of the

world nor held captive by our own passions. Newman described detachment as the "absence of all cupidity," and certainly we shall never be free from that baneful moral disease until we can see the worth of the world's treasures with the detachment of those who refuse to be absorbed by its claims.

It was said of Herder that in his later years he yearned after the invisible world, merely because the visible ceased to stimulate him. There can be no doubt that those who have acquired the spirit of detachment gain a secret of enduring power and pleasure. They know the real value of things, and measuring the world in the balance of spiritual realities recognize that all that is visible is temporal, and that the world's prizes soon fade or must be resigned. In touch with things of the spirit they feel the re-quickening power of Divine revelation, and turn to a more vigorous service in the world.

For the true end of detachment from the world is to find a new attachment elsewhere. It is not enough to be free from the world, we must put ourselves to service to Him whose law is liberty, whom to serve is to reign. We cannot rest in a moral neutrality or find shelter in a stoical apathy. Mystical writers declare that the first stage of progress for the soul lies in detachment from

earthly things. But it is only the first stage. Detachment from the world must be followed by attachment to God. Only in this way can we recognize the ideals of life and follow them with the sustained zeal of those who have seen the vision of perfection, and find their joy in the endeavour to give it form in the affairs of the world.

XIX

TRUE CITIZENSHIP

It is evident that the old distinctions between class and class in the community are breaking down. Yet in the future the divisions between men may be more acute than ever, since they will no longer depend on differences of wealth, education, or social standing, but on men's conception of and response to spiritual realities.

These divisions, not of class but of character, have always existed, but they will become more apparent and more generally acknowledged. At present other standards of social judgment prevail, but they are essentially unreal and unstable. A day will come when a man's moral aim will be held to be the decisive fact about him, determining his place among his fellows. Men dread this prospect, partly because it cuts across so much that seems woven into the very constitution of society and treats with contempt present values. But we have all been warned that this revolution must come. The Kingdom of Heaven

is at hand. State that message in terms of Divine sovereignty and human obedience, and we see that the reign of God implies that men and women are called to live as citizens of a community whose law is the Divine will, and where worth is estimated by loyalty to God and service to one's fellows.

We must look beyond that which is seen and temporal to that which is unseen and eternal, recognizing the immutable and sovereign moral realities which belong to the Divine Order. Only by loyal response to their claims do we acknowledge the reign of God. Those who would enter His Kingdom and become its citizens will take care to avail themselves of everything that helps them to fidelity. But they will not place a ring fence to separate themselves from their neighbours, attempting a delimitation of frontiers between the world and the Church, or between earth and heaven, or between things sacred and secular. These divisions have no meaning for those who know that the reign of God is universal. His sovereignty is greater than our maps imply. His reign must be acknowledged in everything that touches life.

For life is all one, an ever-developing power of existence in a unity within which there is infinite variety of forms and modes of activity, but which

still remains indestructibly one, because it is all in God. It is easier to grasp this fact if we regard the ideal society in terms not of the Kingdom but of the reign of God extending over all life in heaven and earth. This, we cannot doubt, was the truth in the mind of Christ in His frequent references to the Kingdom. His contemporaries thought only of organization and temporal power. He thought of God and His will and man's response to it in character. Interpret life according to the Maker's conception of the reign of God and see what must happen. Who can doubt that it must bring a new sense of values, a new attainment of character, a new motive of conduct affecting not only our international relations, politics, business, art, science, and public morals, but the inner recesses of personality? If men would have the courage to acknowledge that reign of heaven's law we should at once enter, here on earth, into the new world of Christ's Advent.

Christ spoke much of the Fatherhood of God. It was the master-thought of all His teaching, and we must make it the touchstone of all that is offered to us as the truth. But there is need for care not to emphasize one element in that Fatherhood at the expense of another. It signifies love, pity, forgiveness, given to children even

when they least appreciate them. But fatherhood has elements of authority. It implies the presence of law, it demands obedience, it is disciplinary, and sometimes punitive. We forget this to our undoing. The Kingdom must have its King, and His sovereignty must be supreme. Its citizenship is sonship, but it also implies obedience, submission, fellowship. It calls for the sacrifice of the individual for the good of the whole. The reign of God implies an imperative which must be obeyed.

He who acknowledges the claims of this citizenship will never lose confidence about the ultimate issue of life. But victory is not won by the most impressive parades or the most enthusiastic profession of loyalty. Every victory means a war. The most conclusive triumph is the result of the most severe contest. It cannot be attained but by tenacity in the darkest hour and faithful discharge of duty in the lonely watches of the night. But these bring their own triumph, because they transfigure weak men into citizens of the heavenly kingdom. One experience never overtakes him who is faithful. He may suffer much and be sore wounded ; he may be without signs of progress ; the darkness may enfold him. But he never loses the confidence of steadfast hope. In all actions and reactions, in

wars without and questionings within, he retains a buoyant confidence, the optimism of a pure life, which looks without fear to the sure vindication of the Divine will, not only in the history of the world, but in the inner sanctuary of his heart. Those who share this experience are already learning the triumph song of a re-created world.

XX

IRONY OF LIFE

FEW men go through life without being conscious at some time that their sense of justice is violated by the failure of what they judge to be their lawful claims and hopes either for themselves or for their fellows. This sense of puzzled distress comes upon men, adding its own bitterness to their trial, until, assailed by fear or overwhelmed by misfortune, they find themselves framing an indictment against the moral order of the world, or it may be against the theory that there is any moral order at all.

Every man seeks to gain a reasoned theory of life's purpose. It is true that we may often spend a long stretch of years in such entire absorption in business or pleasures that we give ourselves no time to lift our thoughts beyond the world's constant demands. We think only of the next move, and fail to observe the great principles by which life is governed. All our faculties are so bent to the task in hand that we scarcely think of the

ultimate issue of our efforts. But this cannot go on for ever. A great tragedy startles us, an unexpected change of fortune confuses our plans, an illness drives us out of the arena and compels us to retire, at least for a period, from the struggle, or it may be a simple incident awakens long dormant desires, hopes, or fears, and we find ourselves shaken by new forces which compel us to wonder what after all is the meaning of life.

It is not merely that the unexpected happens, but that it destroys all our plans and sets at naught our cherished hopes. We are tempted to believe that we are the playthings of a malevolent power which mocks us by its irony. Men have felt this from the beginning, and it has engaged the attention of the greatest dramatists in our literature. Nowhere has it received more powerful expression than in the ancient Greek poets. For them the envy of the gods and inexorable necessity ruled mankind. Bishop Thirlwall, in his great essay on the irony of Sophocles, showed this in a way which no reader is likely to forget and making it impossible for us to hold so dark a view of fortune.

Men may try to steel themselves against misfortune and accept whatever may happen with dulled acquiescence, but this is a poor refuge for any but the most stoical of men. Most of us

cannot be content with this refuge of fatalism, but even so men find themselves without an adequate explanation of life's experience. They can find no answer to the questions which spring from a man's heart in the presence of undeserved suffering, with fair hopes founded on honourable endeavour and coming to the bloom but never allowed to flower, with high aims loyally pursued but defeated just when attainment seems to be assured.

We may not exaggerate the puzzling tragedies of life, and if we take a large view of experience, are we not driven to confess that men's failures are for the most part congruous to their characters? Yet it is true that some men, and not a few, start life burdened by ancestral folly to live in circumstances which would seem to announce their predestination to destruction of both body and soul. Others there are who, pure and honourable in life, are yet overwhelmed by misfortunes they could neither foresee nor prevent. But looking at the long stretches of human history we find no justification for the view that man is the victim of a cruel or unmeaning destiny which takes no thought of moral desert. Those whom we regard as the victims of cruel fortune frequently show that they have sources of happiness which enable them to triumph even in the

most forbidding circumstances. A law of compensation would seem to act in the moral sphere, and much which men have dreaded, and by which at first they were stunned, has been found the source of happiness of such a kind that they who share it would hesitate to exchange their joyful sorrow for what would appear to be the more fortunate lot of their fellows. Their faith has taken the sting out of life's irony, and turned it to a convincing revelation of divine mercy.

Life's irony may call us to a new energy of higher purpose. It is an excuse for neither rebellion nor despair. Unexpected and undeserved misfortunes express the stern fact that we are never master of fate and that our most careful plans are never assured of success. To stake life on our own powers is the maddest gambling trick, in which the winner may gain the world but will assuredly lose his life. The key by which men find the interpretation of the irony of life is that which makes it appear most sinister and forbidding and yet enables him who uses it to turn misfortune to its own redemptive purpose. Irony finds its most startling expression in the Cross, but it is there that it confesses its own defeat.

It is well for us to recognize not only that our knowledge is finite and relative, and that we cannot track anything to its primary elements,

but also that we are not masters of destiny. This, however, is not sufficient for faith. We have to pass beyond the baffling facts of life to the apprehension of One whose ways may be past searching out, but of whom we know enough to justify us in relying on His goodness in our days of misfortune. We cannot grasp His methods, but by the interpretative insight of faith we can know Him in His truth, justice, and love. That knowledge is sufficient to convince us that the irony of life is no doom of fate, but the mysterious process by which an Infinite Mind fashions men to new purposes in the attainment of that Will whose law is the highest well-being of those whom He has created in love.

XXI

CHANCE

MANY things in life are beyond our power to anticipate or to control. Our most carefully arranged plans fail, or they are carried out in ways quite different from our intentions or our hopes. The unexpected so often happens that we seem to be the sport of mere chance.

If we cannot say there is anything like a cult of chance in the present day, there is certainly a widespread disposition to act as if it were a real element in human affairs. This is remarkable in days when we are constantly, even vehemently, reminded that everything is controlled by laws which act everywhere and without deflection of any kind. It is true that we are told of chance variations by which evolution is said to be carried on, but this theory is rather a confession of ignorance than an account of what really happens. When we cannot determine or foretell the result of a certain combination of circumstances, we are apt to forget that law reigns in the unknown as

truly and effectively as anywhere else, and by referring any event to chance forget that this is rather a refuge for our ignorance than a description of fact.

Apparently there is no alternative for us between belief in providence and belief in chance or blind fortune. Fatalism is scarcely possible for the modern mind. At any rate, few of us would care to acknowledge it to be our creed. It is true that a deistic religion like Mahomedanism makes much of fate, but this is due rather to an excessive rigour in holding the doctrine of Divine omnipotence than to the belief in a blind destiny inherent in nature. It certainly does not deny the action of God, and therefore cannot be reconciled with the presence of chance. Belief in fortune, luck, chance is sheer unfaith.

Not until faith breaks down can chance have any meaning. The worship of chance in ancient Greece and Rome was adopted only when the gods seemed to be unable or unwilling to help men in their troubles or to control the world's affairs. It testified to the bankruptcy of belief not only in a moral ordering of the world, but in the conscious life of the old divinities. And to-day wherever chance is held to have any place or influence we may be sure that belief in God has been abandoned or has become otiose. One of our

most eminent of modern philosophers has declared that we cannot admit contingencies and retain the uses of reason. Philosophy and science then become impossible, for at any point there may be an intrusion of that which negates their use. By substituting belief in God for belief in an irrational spontaneity we rob human life of any meaning.

Belief in Providence has its own difficulties, and they have not been the least real to men who still hold to the conception of a moral order in the world. Such as these shrink from what appears to be the only alternative to faith in a God Who rules all according to His Divine will, and a reasonless fortune without will or love. A thoughtful man determined to deal with facts as he finds them in his own life and the lives of others may hesitate to accept the facile optimism of those who hold that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. How can he account for unmerited suffering, the success of this man and the failure of another? Why do men's fortunes so unaccountably fail to match their deserts? We cannot shirk such questions as these. Sir Henry Jones was more than justified when, in his Gifford Lectures, he declared that the main problem of philosophy and the central concern for theology is the possibility of

identifying the world process as we know it with our conception of the Absolute or of God.

The Bible finds no place for chance. Rather than countenance the very thought of its operation the Prophets do not scruple to use terms which express a violent protest against its possibility, as when they trace even iniquity to the work of God. Divine purpose, they insist, ultimately determines every event. The New Testament contains no word signifying luck, chance, or accident. It is true that in the parable of the Good Samaritan we read "by chance" a certain priest was going down from Jerusalem, but the words employed represent a coincidence of circumstances, and the Greek term for chance is avoided. If we once accept belief in God, and grasp its implications, chance stands for nothing but our own ignorance. The only justification for its use is that it may serve to remind us how much lies beyond the realm of our cognizance, though it must still be within the sphere of law and order.

Such considerations as these may lead us to many questions, and, among others, to the problem whether we are justified in making our common ignorance the occasion of gain or loss. It may be impossible to discover a principle on which to base a general condemnation of games

of chance or of gambling. But when we proceed to reflect on what results spring from them in the life of the community and often in the life of individuals, we shall feel the need of caution lest we unwittingly make ignorance, our own and our neighbour's, the occasion of cupidity, indiscipline, and idleness, and disregard the safeguards against its dangers, which are humility, faith, and fellowship with others in mutual service. The alternative is God or chance. If we believe in the first, the other is but a mere phrase representing nothing.

XXII

THE SECOND CHANCE

THERE comes a day when we find ourselves suddenly aware that most of our life's store of time is spent. What is gone is more than what we may hope for in the future. We look back on those years of youth and manhood's strength, with their waxing vigour of life, and recognize that for the future our powers must die down and we must live more cautiously. Middle age has overtaken us.

The retrospect of middle age is never without its sobering reflections. The work we hoped to do and what we hoped to be, compared with what we have actually accomplished and what we are, reveal humiliating contrasts. Some of us must needs confess that we have played the wanton with opportunity. Most of us acknowledge that we have only partially realized our hopes or attained what has been within our powers. But it is not in what we have done or left undone that we come to the final test of life. That is

found in what we have made of ourselves. We are not what we might have been in character, in moral and spiritual power, in all that makes up the mystery of personality. Though it may be unconfessed, this is the chief source of middle age's loss of joy. Other men may pay us the homage due to our experience or assured position, but we are conscious of a sense of dryness in the springs of life. We may have gained wealth and reputation, but we have lost in hope and joy of soul.

This is not by any means the inevitable condition of middle age. For there are some among us now old in years who in youth were inspired with the glow of fervent faith and have remained true, with whatever temporary waverings, to the ideals they discerned in early manhood. But most of us, it would seem, have been damaged or coarsened in the storms and stress of life. Ideals have grown dim and the demands of the world more insistent. We have made a compromise between them. It seemed the best we could do, but we must confess it was a second best, and we are discontented, not rebelliously, perhaps, but with a dull acquiescence which can scarcely be distinguished from acknowledged defeat.

Here we come upon the peril of middle age. Its chief temptation is a cynical disbelief in self-

sacrifice, purity of motive, in loyalty to truth or unaffected goodness. From this there comes a confusion of moral values, an inability to recognize the spiritual needs and powers of men, a desire for ease which scorns every movement for what is good, beautiful, and true. It may conceal its contempt by declaring that even the most evil retains something of that which is good, and good is largely mixed with evil, but that is only because it has ceased to believe in either. A French historian was once described as "hardened at once against good and evil." The middle age of not a few might be described in similar terms.

But if it has its perils, middle age has its special grace and opportunities. It is the time for the readjustment of life in the light of its own experience. Men who have passed their meridian often condemn the obtuseness of youth in not accepting the benefit of older men's guidance. If, it is urged, they would but profit by the testimony of their elders, half their difficulties would be overcome, and they would proceed to a future unweakened by defeats which otherwise will surely inflict on them the shame of their own folly. But why should we wonder at the common disregard of others' experience when men make such little use of their own? Let any middle-aged man make a thoughtful retrospect of life and study

the meaning of his mingled fortunes, its cautions, its warnings, its failures, its encouragements and commands. Let him consider the lessons of experience, and ask how he is making use of them. If he is using them well, the worst blunders and sins may help in his restoration. Experience is the special boon of middle age, and, if loyally accepted, a man may go forward with renewed energy and courage, not the less successful because he is disciplined in knowledge, not the less joyous in heart because he has tasted bitterness by the way.

Middle age is the age of the second chance. As life proceeds we gain a truer estimate of values and a keener sense of proportion. We are not so easily deceived by appearances, and there is a new inducement to pass beyond the temporal and visible to the eternal realities of the spirit, which may be seen all the more clearly because we are less dazed by the glamour and noise of the world. The ideal is as real as ever. We may have lost it in the mists of passion, but these no longer hide it from our sight. The inevitable decay of physical strength, the weakening of our intellectual grasp may be accompanied by an ever-expanding capacity of moral life and spiritual powers. A resolute will may in middle age redeem the blunders and errors of youth, and,

calling to its aid that grace of faith which Christianity offers, learn the reality of forgiveness and the power of that newness of life which is life for evermore. The reckoning of spent years brings the revelation of life's second chance. Let a man take it and no grace will be denied him ; let him prove a good steward of the remaining years and he will lay up for himself much treasure for the time to come.

XXIII

THE RETROSPECT OF LIFE

MOST of us, as we draw near to the end of life and its activities—some, perhaps, at earlier stages in our career—are tempted to look back and wonder whether we have made the best use of our time and opportunities ; whether, if we could have them over again, we should make a different and better use of them ; or whether we might have been more useful or more prosperous in some other career or profession. Like the Psalmist of old when his spirit was vexed, and his heart within him was desolate, we “ remember the time past,” we “ muse upon God’s works ” in the ordering of our own individual lives.

In such a retrospect there will always be some drop of bitterness : *surgit amari aliquid*. Early promise has not been fulfilled ; bright hopes, our own or those of others for us, have come to nothing ; others to whom we know ourselves not inferior in ability have passed us in the race for wealth or for high place in Church and State. We

are conscious, perhaps, of lacking the qualities of "push" and self-advertisement by which men force their way to the top; we have been handicapped, as it now appears, by our own modesty, by a distaste for courting favours or soliciting patronage, by positive incapacity for "licking the boots" of great people. And so we have missed the goal at which others have arrived.

That is the drop of bitterness in a retrospect of life; and to those who allow it to poison the springs of memory till their old age is soured by disappointment, it may be very bitter indeed. But, after all, are wealth and high place the only worthy aim of a well-spent life? Is it not possible to avow a distaste for money-making, or an indifference to high position, without inviting the retort that "grapes are sour"? Is it inconceivable that a man of intellect and parts should really prefer "the cool sequestered vale of life"—*fallentis semita vitæ*—to the glare of publicity and fierce unscrupulous competition for material rewards? Or that, when the end comes, the retrospect even of success should itself be bitter? Dr A. C. Benson, in one of his pleasant gossipy books, cites as perhaps the most pathetic of recorded death-bed utterances that of a certain Bishop, whose last words were, "I have held a great position, and have not been equal to it."

A melancholy confession indeed ! Think of all that perhaps had gone to the winning of that Bishopric, only to end in self-condemnation and confession of failure. Those who have not risen high have at least been spared from such self-mortification, and from the verdict expressed in that biting epigram of Tacitus upon a Roman Emperor that he was " *Omnium consensu capax Imperii, nisi imperasset.*"

" The rising unto *Place* is laborious ; And by Paines men come to greater Paines ; And it is sometimes base ; and by Indignities, Men come to Dignities. The standing is slippery, and the Regresse is either a downfall, or at least an Eclipse, which is a Melancholy Thing."

So wrote Francis Bacon in his essay " Of Great Place " : and there can be no better testimony to the uncertainty that dogs the retrospect of even outwardly successful lives, or to the ups and downs of success itself. Retrospect of life may carry with it thoughts of what we should or might do could we have it over again. But what do we mean by this—beginning over again with, or without, the lessons of experience ? If without them, we should probably do much what we have done, with the same success or failure, the same mistakes, the same aspirations, except so far as different environment might condition our ideas

and conduct. A new life *plus* the experience of an earlier life—that surely is a vain speculation, upon any theory of transmigration of souls. But is any life, however prosperous and happy on the whole, worth living over again with its sorrows, its failures, and its sins? The answer is surely, No. We have our exits and our entrances upon the stage of life; we play our parts, well or ill as the case may be, and leave the stage to others, with no thought for ourselves but that of the Publican's prayer, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." As we reach the end of our appointed span and look back on life, we shall not want it over again, though we would have it spared as long as may be for those whom we love and to whom we are dear.

But retrospect, if it is to be profitable, must have regard to moral and spiritual rather than to temporal and material issues. We need to remember what we have been more than what we have done, for it is the spirit in which we have done such work as has fallen to us that will be appraised by the Judge. If conscience tells of duty done, in however obscure a sphere, or of one small corner of the earth, in which our life's work has lain, left a little better than we found it; if we have cheered those whose lot in life is hard, not by indiscriminate and demoralizing doles, but

in a true spirit of Christian charity, if by voice or act or pen we have helped others as opportunity offered—

Helping, when we meet them,
Lame dogs over stiles,

then, it may be, a retrospect of the least eventful life will bring peace at the last, with the gracious verdict, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

PROBLEMS OF FAITH

XXIV

RETICENCE IN RELIGION

To be reticent about our deepest feelings, especially in religious matters, need not imply any lack of earnestness, or uncertain knowledge, or halting faith. It is rather due to temperament, to an instinctive reluctance to drag hidden things of deep meaning into public notice. It is found less in shallow than in serious natures : it is often a "last infirmity of noble minds."

The saintliest characters, men and women of pure life and clear spiritual insight, are sometimes those who say least about it ; while the charlatan and the hypocrite move among their fellows exuding what has been happily termed "piosity." Many others, who are not in any sense "mystics," or specially interested in questions of doctrine or worship, shrink from saying much about their real feelings. It is distasteful to their finer nature. A well-known and somewhat hackneyed story tells how a distinguished person, beset by importunate curiosity as to

what his religion was, replied : " The religion of all sensible men." " But what," asked his questioner, " is the religion of sensible men ? " " That, madam," he answered, " every sensible man keeps to himself." Whether true or not, this story touches the hidden springs of religious reticence.

But what, some one may ask, is the spiritual value of such reticence ? Granted that it may be good for those who practise it, may it not deprive others of that whereby they might have been profited in intercourse with minds superior to their own ? Or may not the power of saintly lives to leaven the world be unduly restricted if they will not, so to speak, come more out of their shell to impart their treasure to others ? As to this point, few, we may hope, have been so unfortunate as never to have met any one whose mere presence was an inspiration for good, from whom virtue went forth without a word spoken, in whose company others felt themselves better. And as to the spiritual value of reticence, we learn something from the contrast drawn by the great Authority upon such values between those who conduct their religious exercises in public " that they may be seen of men," and such as " enter into their inner chamber and, having shut the door, pray to their Father, which is in secret." Self-restraint and reticence in the expression of

religious feeling is surely an essential feature of His teaching.

Yet, however becoming, or even beautiful, such reticence may be in men's private relations with one another, there are aspects in which it may be less desirable ; in the pulpit, for example, or in the Press, or upon the platform, wherever and whenever men of light and leading in religious life and knowledge have the opportunity of enlightening others. If a preacher or religious leader is tempted to betray his trust by giving less than the full measure of what he knows to be true out of consideration for the weakness, the ignorance, or the prejudices of others, or to avoid shaking their faith in teaching which they have already received, his reticence, however well meaning, may be proved unwise. To conceal from the young, for example, or from uneducated persons of maturer years who are mentally children, the results of modern knowledge about the Bible and religious truths, is a precaution which recoils upon its users. Sooner or later those whom they have deceived will learn the truth—or some of it. The *suppressio veri* will turn out to have been a *suggestio falsi* : and they may jump to the conclusion that everything else which they were taught was wrong. Such unwise reticence on the part of those who knew better has been responsible for

many a disastrous failure in religious life, lamented for when too late with the bitter cry, "If only they had told me the truth!"

To keep back knowledge from fear of consequences (perhaps imaginary) to oneself, or to gratify ignorant prejudice, is not religious reticence; not the self-restraint of which we believe that the Great Teacher approves. It is more akin to the conduct of those whom He condemns in scathing terms: "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." But the reticence which shrinks from parading the most sacred thoughts of the heart, even at the risk of being misunderstood—this surely is good and acceptable to Him.

XXV

INDIFFERENCE

ARE men and women to-day generally indifferent to religion? The charge of spiritual apathy is frequently made against them, and almost as frequently assumed to be true, but it may be worth while to ask whether it is justified. There can be no question that there is much indifference among us with regard to religion, but it has always existed. Does it prevail to a specially wide extent and degree at the present time?

It is unnecessary to point to the signs of indifference to religion. They are before our eyes, and we cannot ignore them. On the other hand, there is much which goes to show that what appears to be unconcern about the things of the Spirit may be traced to other sources than apathy. It is still true that few questions interest so large a number of people as those which deal with religious matters. Among the novels which have been most widely read and discussed in recent years must be numbered those whose main theme

has been concerned with questions of faith. We also observe the rise of almost innumerable cults, or what are called movements, which express men's sense of the realities of the spiritual life and their desire to respond to them. In this matter the present age resembles the first centuries of Christian history, when competing religions gave evidence alike of men's rejection of obsolescent religion and their longing for something more consonant with their needs and aspirations. In that age Christianity came and offered to them what they most desired, and in the end won the allegiance of the great mass of reflective men. It is possible that this history of religious revival will repeat itself before our eyes.

The persistence of controversy in religious matters, whatever else it may be, provides further evidence of continued interest in religion. The recent discussions on reunion have not only attracted wide attention, they have been distinguished by the evident sincerity of all parties, not only in their desire to effect some definite progress towards restored unity, but also to come to some agreement about the true nature of the Church, its ministry, its vocation, and its claims. The result attained may seem disappointing to ardent minds, but it gives evidence of a living interest in the progress of Christianity.

There is, no doubt, a widespread and perhaps increasing abstention from religious observances, but this by itself is no proof that men are indifferent to religion. It may prove that the Churches do not attract and hold people, and that their methods of instruction or forms of worship fail to evoke interest, but it does not necessarily prove that people are indifferent to religion. If the truth were recognized, their apparent unconcern might be traced to their difficulty in finding anything adequate to their needs in what is offered to them. Formal statements of Christian doctrine seem to have little relation to their experience, the mode of life insisted on appears to give disproportionate emphasis to quite unimportant matters, while the ideals presented to them seem vague or unreal. It may be suggested that if the Church would take care to frame its message in terms matching men's experience, and shape its public worship so that men might give freer expression to what is really in their hearts, many who now appear heedless or apathetic would manifest a true ardour of religious life.

The prolonged discussions on Prayer-book Revision have their justification in so far as they are designed to bring reality to public worship and express more truly the faith of the Church. This

it seems is the main justification for revision. Zeal for traditional forms of worship and care for the historical continuity of the Church's liturgical services may be commended, but it is of paramount importance that the needs of men to-day should not be sacrificed to the fear of departure from venerable and even venerated rites and ceremonies. If this were remembered we might expect that many questions which now excite anxious controversy would cease to distract attention from more important matters, and we might hope for a Revised Prayer-book which would do much to revive religion throughout the country.

No doubt there is a wide misconception of what the Church teaches and what it is doing, and frequently it is condemned unjustly, but while it can never hope to escape criticism and must be prepared for opposition, its leaders may be expected to take care lest they place stumbling-blocks in the way of the ignorant or bewildered and give stones to its children who are asking for the Bread of Life.

Yet, after all, it must be confessed that indifference to religion is very real and widespread. If we have laid stress on the causes within the Church of this apathy we must not forget that frequently they are found in the worldliness,

the self-indulgence, the presumption or procrastination of those who are conscious of their inertness of spirit. If men feel that religion has little reality to them they must ask whether they live according to what they must needs confess are the plain demands of faith, whether they act according to the knowledge they already possess, and whether they are living in such a way as to give the appeal of religion a free entrance into their hearts and minds.

XXVI

MAN'S DUAL NATURE

MAN has always been conscious of two opposing streams of emotional impulse. To call them by the names of "higher" and "lower," or "material" and "spiritual," is only partially to describe them, for each partakes in a certain degree of the nature of the other. It is the penalty man pays for his complex nature that he cannot always keep these two streams of tendency distinct: he is never quite independent of the periodic "push" of his purely physical nature, so that his most generous emotions may partake of certain baser elements that he would gladly, if he could, leave out of the account.

Philosophers have dealt with this phenomenon in human nature, not always successfully. In such systems as Buddhism and Stoicism we find a radical attempt to mark the line that divides them. Monachism was also the earliest protest of religious natures against the intrusion of the lower self into the most exalted of spiritual

aspirations. But under whatever system man has attempted to remedy this defect, he has never yet succeeded in rooting out the old Adam. It has always lurked in the shadows of his personality to appear from time to time as a check in the process of perfection. In the Apostle Paul it becomes the subject of a spiritual despair that takes shape in the well-known apostrophe, "O wretched man that I am!" Man is wretched indeed in this *damnosa hereditas* from a remote and unregenerate past.

But its effect is seen most clearly and works most disastrously on the larger scale of history.

The most perfect form of religion has at some period in its career lost the splendour of its initial impulse and sunk into apathy or corruption. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. The scandal of a debased Christianity has been the most potent weapon in the armoury of the powers of darkness. The farther we get from its source the more sullied we find the stream, and men call for a return to first principles, for a new presentation of the truth that time and human frailty have served to pervert.

In the thought of Jesus this law of man's moral being on the larger social or national scale is illustrated by His doctrine of "the two kingdoms." The Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this

world. This antithesis is not merely rhetorical but real, and goes to the very root of the moral conflict as it is waged on the field of history.

Jesus taught His disciples to take the true measure of this kingdom where Satan reigns, a kingdom whose franchise is based not only on lust and human passion, but hypocrisy as well and all those meaner vices that men know so well how to deck out in the habiliments of virtue. To be in this world and yet not of it was one of the first lessons in Christian discipleship.

But there could be no mastery of indigenous, organized evil until man had first conquered on the battlefield of his own soul. Here, perhaps, we shall find the source of our inability to win the world of Christ—the incompleteness of our personal detachment from sin and the things of sense. Certainly we cannot raise our fellow-men unless we are ourselves above them. So long as our discipleship lacks the true note of “other-worldliness,” so long shall we merely reproduce in society a reflection of our own faithlessness. But how are we to attack this kingdom of Satan, this world that lieth in outer darkness? Is it any part of our duty to attack it at all? There are certain Gospel contexts that seem to hint that the disciples of Jesus were to turn their backs on the “world”; that those human

elements that deliberately rejected the truth were to be left to the darkness that was their natural medium. But we must distinguish. While Jesus teaches that to preach the Gospel to unregenerate natures is to "cast pearls to swine," He certainly looked forward to evangelization on a national, nay, a cosmic, scale. None the less, we find no trace of what is called a "social" gospel. Jesus speaks only of a "kingdom" based on qualities that rarely if ever enter into our social relationships at all; based, indeed, on a trans-valuation of just those values by which "society" as such lives and moves and has its being.

We can only say, then, that the claims of Christ do not admit any degrees of discipleship. It is all or nothing. "Society" may not be radically bad, but until it is governed by motives the very opposite of those that now control it, it cannot claim to be Christian, it is still in outer darkness.

The earliest form of Christ's kingdom is to be found in the apostolic brotherhood, where none "of them said that aught of the things that he possessed were his own," and members enriched their fellows by a commerce that in no way impoverished themselves. This is the only true communism, where the spiritual restlessness that riches and poverty alike create becomes a new enthusiasm, a new motive for mutual service.

It is sometimes said that the riches of the rich create the poverty of the poor. While this is economically false, it is ethically true. Poverty would not be felt in a world where men sought it out as the only real possession. This is the key to social Christianity. It is also the key to individual perfection, for when a man has taken the true measure of material values he is on the way to resolve the antinomy of his dual nature, he is on the way to self-conquest, and is not far from the Kingdom of God.

XXVII

HIGHER VISION

THIS world never engages all a man's powers. There can be no limiting our efforts to this world of time and sense. Doubtless its demands are insistent, and the duties it imposes must be discharged to the uttermost if we would put our lives to their true use. We may not ignore its claims or flinch in the struggle to meet them, but even when we do this we are conscious that there are powers within us which find no full operation in the work to which we are summoned. We are concerned with other things beyond its range. A man in the full vigour of life using all his faculties transcends the limits of the temporal and visible. In these also he has duties, and unless he fulfils them he will lose the true grace of his manhood and the plenitude of its powers.

It is the light which comes from above that gives this world's business its true meaning and helps us to make it worthy of our efforts. Apart from the apprehension of the invisible realities of

life we become bemused in playthings without purpose, victims of our own passions, finding no meaning in existence and no worth in our selves. The conclusion with Marcus Aurelius that apart from our interests in the things of the spirit we never reach the fullness of our powers must be accepted :—

“The idle business of shows, plays on the stage, a bone cast to little dogs, a bit of bread in fishponds, labourings of ants, and burden-carrying runnings to and fro of frightened little mice, puppets pulled by strings—this is what life resembles.”

The stoicism of the Emperor expresses a noble theory of life, and much in it may be accepted by every man who would retain his liberty. It will help him to preserve his integrity and save him from being cheated by the tinsel splendour of the world's prizes or overwhelmed by any calamity or suffering which may fall upon him. But something more is required than a victory won by contempt alike of fortune's smiles and terrors, for mere hardness of heart, a trained insensitiveness to life's manifold experience, is less a victory than a retreat. Nor is it enough to declare with Wordsworth :—

We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind

In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be ;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering ;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

This is not all that is required of us. For true life demands something more than a vigorous welcome to any temporal claims or brave acquiescence in misfortunes if they come upon us. We must transcend the world's favour and be unmoved by its condemnation. There is that in us and around us that will carry us beyond the things of time and sense to spiritual realities, and it is only as a man looks beyond the transient to that which is permanent that he can see himself and the world as they are. Even the best things of the world in so far as they end in themselves lead to disillusion and may bring disaster, but in the light of the unseen we discern their true worth and purpose. To live according to nature in the only sense which life can be rightly predicated of men we must live in the light of that which is supernatural.

We may urge that the notion of a separation of time from eternity has no validity. Man's apprehension of eternal life becomes real to him in the changing things of this life and gets its substance from concrete experience. We attain eternal life

in the conditions in which we pass our brief time in this world. It comes to those who set their hearts and minds to follow the realities of spiritual experience which are disclosed to those who look beyond the near horizon of this world's interests to the activities of the Divine Spirit. Such was the teaching of the Master. The worth and meaning of life can be discovered only as it is brought within the sphere of those higher realities which transcend what we can measure by time or weigh in the balances of this world. With everything that takes place in our experience there is something which, if it is allowed its full operation, carries us beyond that which is seen and temporal to the realms of the unseen and eternal.

To those who have learnt this secret there are facts of history which become facts of eternal significance. This the Christian asserts to be true of such facts as the Birth and Death of Christ. That these are historical events is clear, but that does not exhaust their power. They have a timeless validity. The Birth of Christ took place at a certain date, and we count the years as if time itself had been shaped by it. But it transcends time. It has a permanent, an eternal significance to those who find in it a new life among men with a new purpose and destiny.

And as with the Birth so with the Death of Christ. Apart from all our theories the Cross is a fact of eternal significance. Its reality did not end when the sun went down on that first Good Friday. Something was done which persists and shall persist until evil is brought to naught and time shall be no more.

To confine all our thought and efforts to the seen and temporal alone is to make the world a prison house in which our souls are held in captivity, without faith or hope. To ignore that which is temporal in the desire to live entirely in the unseen world is to be led astray by a mysticism which refuses the discipline of this world's duty and mistakes the creature of its own imagination for the eternal realities of the Spirit. Life is all one. Only in this unity can we render our full service to God and man. The failure of most of us is due to the fact that we take too circumscribed a view of life, too small an estimate of our manhood's possibilities. We lack the higher vision, and in our absorption in the transient we disqualify ourselves from that which is eternal.

XXVIII

SPIRITUAL POWERS

IN a *questionnaire* issued some time ago by a prominent psychologist one of the questions was : " Do you consider yourself religious, and why ? " It is reported that one-fourth of those who answered it declared that they did not know whether or not they were religious. It would seem that some of them merely intended to state that they had discarded the religious beliefs and system in which they had been brought up, but others confessed that they were without conscious response to anything that religion represents.

No one can deny that men have different degrees of religious consciousness. As they differ in the keenness of their hearing and sight or in their appreciation of beauty, so they manifest a similar disparity in their apprehension of religion. To this we may add that every man varies at different times in the vigour and intensity of his response to spiritual impressions. The religious

life is rarely maintained at an equal vigour. It is subject to all the fluctuations which are the inevitable results of varying physical conditions, changing circumstances, as well as the different moral and spiritual influences to which man is exposed. The more vigorous his religious life the more constant it will be ; but even in the most favourable conditions it requires discipline and cultivation.

Plotinus records that only three times during his life did he enjoy the immediate vision of God. And the most ardent mystics know that they can but rarely attain a clear apprehension of spiritual reality. The soul cannot always live in the vivid consciousness of the unseen, for men lack the capacity of continuous response to the fullness of divine revelation. Indeed, it would appear that those who have the keenest apprehension of the mystic vision have not infrequently felt themselves banished from the Presence of God to the darkest night of the soul. There are psychological explanations of these alternations of spiritual ecstasy and despondency ; but when we examine the religious apathy which exists continuously in so many people we are bound to consider its special causes.

Many men find that conventional religion affects them not at all. For them its rites and

ceremonies have no meaning ; its doctrines and symbols have no correspondence to truth. They regard all religion as little more than self-devised means by which their contemporaries comfort themselves or frame measures of self-protection against their passions or their fears. In repugnance or indifference to what current religion appears to be, they persuade themselves that they are without any religious faculties. But in nothing is it so easy for men to deceive themselves as in such a matter as this. A man may look either with indifference or even dislike at the religion which is around him, not because he has no capacity of spiritual experience, but because what he sees satisfies neither his needs nor his aspirations.

But this does not disguise the fact that there are men who seem to be without any spiritual life. They have no faculty for religion and show no signs of ability to apprehend its significance, no power to respond to its appeal. The things of the spirit have no interest for them. They are religiously ungifted. Such men and women cannot be considered normal, for it is clear that most men have something within themselves which presupposes the existence of a world beyond that which is seen, powers which can have no full exercise except as they go out to a world of the

spirit. But while we may be justified in believing that normal human life is always religious, we have to confess that so far as we can judge, or men judge themselves, there are some who have no conscious religious experience.

This brings us into the presence of a great mystery before which it is our comfort to remember that we are to be judged according to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not. But it is clear that the great majority of men have spiritual gifts, though in varying power, and no one is justified in excusing his neglect of religion's claims by the plea that he does not possess powers to respond to that which is supernatural before he has made an earnest and persistent endeavour by self-discipline and training to test his capacities of spiritual apprehension. For always religion demands the whole man, his will, reason, and emotion, each and all working freely. Spiritual apathy for the most part is due to absorption in material things, the business and pleasures of this life, or the blinding mists of passion and self-interest. This atrophy of the spiritual power must be fought against as the wanderer in the snows must struggle against the numbing desire for the sleep which will surely end in death.

Those who wish to discover and develop their

religious life will not suppose that to do so they must separate the spiritual from the physical, the sacred from the secular. Life is all one. The world is an ordered whole of matter and spirit : man is a unity of body and soul. Every faculty of human life must be exercised, but sometimes we must be prepared to sacrifice the lower to the higher for the preservation of the whole. We shall be humble enough to use such means as men's experience shows are helpful in the education of the spirit, seeking in the ordinances of religion, its sacraments, its discipline, and its fellowship aids for the developing of our religious powers. For it is certain that if we leave the faculties of the soul unexercised they will steadily decay. If we pervert them by greed of gain, lust, or pride, they will surely be destroyed, and what might have led us to the open vision of God will leave us with the reprobate mind which comes to those who refuse to have God in their knowledge.

XXIX

SEEING THE INVISIBLE

IN a short poem entitled "The Impercipient," Hardy represents a man at a Cathedral service afflicted by the consciousness that he cannot share the faith it expresses. What are realities of the unseen world to others have no meaning for him. He questions whether he is deficient in spiritual vision or whether others are only paying homage to their own fantasies.

We can have no doubt that the inequalities we observe in men's physical and mental powers exist also in their spiritual capacities. Some are sensitive to all that tells of a world beyond that which is palpable. They live in the power of a higher life than that of time and space. Others, apparently, have nothing which enables them to recognize or appreciate what they cannot weigh and handle. Between these two classes there are many grades, showing that in nothing do men so widely differ as in their capacity to apprehend the things of the spirit. This fact

leads us to consider the problem of the spiritually ungifted.

Perhaps we cannot do more than agree with "The Impercipient" of Hardy's verses, who declares :—

Why thus my soul should be consigned
To infelicity,
Why always I must feel as blind
To sights my brethren see,
Why joys they've found I cannot find
Abides a mystery.

But we cannot be content to rest at this stage. No man may judge himself to be without faculties of spiritual perception and growth because he is apparently unable to discern the unseen through the media which disclose them to his neighbours. There are many voices in the world, and each has its message. No one understands them all. Perhaps every one may understand some.

Those who are quickest in their response to the message of the Church and the appeal of its worship are not necessarily more highly endowed with powers of spiritual perception than those who find Divine revelation in other ways. But we may feel justified in concluding from the most wide and varied experience that men find the clearest assurance of the revelation of God in the life of Christ and the teaching of His Church.

Nothing else so plainly manifests the realities of the invisible world or evokes so certain a response. But even among those who agree in their acceptance of the verities of Christianity there exists the greatest diversity in clearness of vision. Some see but dimly, as through dark mists, or distort what is revealed, and their account of it is so disproportionate as to be a perversion of the truth. It is the pure in heart who see God clearly, but our purity is never unsullied.

The great Teacher of mankind recognized this disparity of spiritual perception among men. He knew that each saw what he had the power to see. No two men ever grasped the truth in exactly the same way or interpreted its significance in precisely the same form. Yet in so far as they were humble and sincere they were all alike in the fact of their progress in knowledge. In the school of the Divine Teacher there are many classes, but all are called to test what they have learnt in the varied experiences of their lives. That fact is the source of a never-failing happiness. Men are not distressed because they know so little when they are conscious that they are constantly learning more. They do not complain of the darkness when they are journeying towards the light. The mystery of life and death serves only to deepen their devotion and encourage their fidelity, while

it evokes that awe which at once expresses the consciousness of ignorance, the reality of truth, and the fact of Divine revelation.

There are probably not a few among us who judge themselves blind to the invisible without sufficient justification. Absorbed in the business and pleasures of this world, distracted by trouble, or, it may be, overcome by evil passions, their spiritual faculties are unused and becoming atrophied. He who would know the secret of God and his own nature must place himself where it is disclosed, and take time to consider its meaning. Sometimes light will come in daily work, as apparently it came to some of the Apostles. To others it will shine in overwhelming brightness as it came to St Paul on the road to Damascus, but to most men it comes in the silences of life, the times of withdrawal from the world's noise and chaffering, in the purposeful exodus from the bondage of the seen to the Throne of the Presence. Such is prayer, which is not so much the offering of petition or praise, but the listening of the soul, the gaze of the inner man on the mystery of God.

No man is justified in concluding that he lacks this power of spiritual perception until he has paused to look and stayed to listen, for here it is pre-eminently true that those who seek find. If

still he learns nothing, let him at least refrain from the assumption that there is nothing to be learnt. Time may not make the vision clear, but life does not end with the short measures of this world.

XXX

THE WORTH OF THEORY

JOIN a group of Englishmen discussing any movement in religion or politics and sooner or later you will hear the theorist condemned. Carlyle, it is plain, represented the attitude of most of us in his vigorous denunciation of the man of theory in contrast with the man of action. Though, it is to be remembered, he did not confound the thinking man, "the worst enemy of the Prince of Darkness," with the theorist, for the first is always preparing to express his thought in deed, the second knows no end of easily spun fancies which have never been put to the test of action.

Yet theories every man must have. We must frame some way of accounting for what we see around us, or what is reported to us by others, or what is part of our own experience. Sometimes we are told that we may accept certain facts and refuse to form any theories about them, but that seems to be impossible. Every fact has its relation to other facts, and we are compelled to

come to some conclusion about their inter-relation. No incident, no affirmation or denial stands alone, and we are compelled to make the attempt to correlate it in some way or other with our experience, that is, to frame a theory even though we may not try to give it formal expression.

We cannot, therefore, blame the theorist because he has his theories, but because he has nothing else, or because he frames them without seeking to acquire the adequate equipment either of knowledge or of thought necessary to shape them well. But even when men have taken all possible care in this process, it must be recognized that theories can never claim to be complete, for at any moment something may happen, the emergence of a new fact, some alteration in former conditions which may require their modification. Theories are the least stable of men's work. Every one knows how the theory of evolution has changed so often in its form that it has become difficult to say exactly what it really is. Even Newton's theory of gravitation, which most of us regarded as final, must now be modified in the light of Einstein's theory of relativity.

All this has its special importance in religion. In no other department of life have men been so ready to frame their theories, so confident of

their truth, so insistent on their acceptance. But it is precisely in this sphere that most care is needed to justify our theories. No one is entitled to offer or even to frame his theories of religious values, their character and power, until he has qualified himself by testing them in his own life. He must learn his facts at first hand, and test them in himself before he is in a position to theorize about them. Theories do not come first, but last. Their worth depends on their correspondence to experience. Not until we have made trial of Christianity can we consider ourselves qualified to frame theories about it, because they must be based on the knowledge of a Person, and we can know a Person only by immediate contact with Him, learning His character by His influence on our own.

The Gospels do not begin with theories. They record facts, they manifest a Person, they impose the duty of obedience to Him. Not until we have accepted the challenge He makes can we learn His secret. We must first let Him have His way in our lives, we must give Him free play, we must accept Him as our Master before we can understand Him sufficiently for the framing of any adequate theory about Him. And even then our attempt to account for Him can be only partially true. For we have seen there is no finality in

theory, and here this is true not only because He is so infinitely above our measures, but because the very fact of our acceptance of Him brings continually fresh manifestations of His transcendent power and love.

Theory, however, has its proper use. As Coleridge reminds us, it is a help to investigation. We misuse it when we regard it as the final expression of our thought or experience. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It calls us to a constant review of the facts on which it is based, a more rigid scrutiny of its implications, a more thorough test of it in the demands of life. Only in this way can we be prepared to answer the question: "Whom say ye that I am?"

The question was put only after the disciples had been much in the company of their Master. Their theory, when at last it was expressed, was framed in terms of life. It was in this way that they proved their sense of its worth. He who claims to have arrived at any theory in morals or religion is bound, if he would vindicate his sincerity, to test it in his conduct, and trust himself to its faithful application in every circumstance. Only in this way can he go on to discover more and more of its worth, the measure of its correspondence with reality, its usefulness as an aid to meet the demands of duty, its

comfort in suffering, its power in the difficulties which confront us all.

Christianity offers itself to this test of life, and until he makes that test it is impossible for any man to know its meaning. But having done this and framed his theories about it, he will find that they give place to convictions which become part of himself. For faith is neither theory nor opinion nor modes of thought. It is the action of the whole manhood, going out to Him who in strangely varied ways justifies the venture of all those who put their trust in Him. For them theory gives place to facts of immediate experience, which they can no more deny than the reality of their own existence. Then, but not until then, theory receives the endorsement of life.

XXXI

FORMS

FORMS, phrases, and ceremonies are sometimes dismissed as unessential to faith. But they must have their place in a historic religion professed by men of varied experience meeting for public worship or combining in their witness to their faith before their fellows. Forms, then, are seen to have their importance, not so much on their own account, but for the service they render to the expression or preservation of religion. The husk may have no life, but it protects the kernel and allows it to grow to its full development. Similarly, the forms of religion, without vitality themselves, protect belief from becoming vague, and help it to develop in life.

Experience proves that the use of fixed forms in religion has its dangers, since it is possible that they may be retained after the conception of the faith they were designed to express or preserve has been abandoned. When this happens, men become mere formalists, repeating terms or

retaining ceremonies which end in themselves. This is the source of the formalism which is the enemy of living religion. It is important to distinguish between the formalist and the hypocrite. The formalist makes no pretence of holding to the faith which the form he retains was designed to express ; he is content to comply with certain traditional rites and ceremonies without going any further. The hypocrite, on the other hand, affects to believe what the form stands for, and to be deeply affected by the faith it represents. He may disregard the form altogether if he can by so doing persuade his fellows or himself that his devotion to religion is greater than it can express. There is, however, a formalism which rejoices in the abandonment of form, and it is seen in the rigid abolition of all rites and ceremonies, as if they were inconsistent with true religion. A man may become a formalist in his rejection of forms as completely as another by his unreasoning adherence to them. It may appear to be a paradox to affirm that formalism may exist where no forms are accepted, but experience shows only too plainly that this is not only possible, but that it is often done.

Carlyle, in one of his most characteristic chapters in "Past and Present," declares that formulas are as real and as necessary for man as

the very skin and muscle of his life. So long as they have vitality they are a living skin and tissue to him. But they are never permanent, for all formulas in the progress of living growth are very sure to die, and that when this happens they lead to decay and death to those who retain them. Formalism is to be condemned, not for what it leads a man to do or say, but for what it leads him to neglect. If he rests in forms he will assuredly become chill, heartless, unresponsive to moral or spiritual ideas, for formalism has no life, and its victims never come into contact with the throbbing energy of faith. They deal with counters, instead of the true coin of God's Kingdom. Their actions are concerned with appearance, and they are uninfluenced by reality. Sooner or later they destroy "Sacred Religion, Mother of form and fear."

Recognizing this danger men have attempted to find in mystic experience the highest attainment of religion. Certainly some men, if not all, are able on occasion to pass beyond that which is visible and external to a direct apprehension of the truth and an immediate consciousness of God. But this mystic experience cannot be assured to all at any one time, nor to any person on all occasions, so that a religion which is purely mystical lacks consistency, and fails to

propagate itself among the mass of men. If forms of religion may be abandoned in some special crisis they are necessary for men subject to those actions and reactions which come to them in the varied levels of life's experience. For devout men have their times of exaltation, but they also have their times of what the old writers were accustomed to call spiritual dryness, when religion brings no open vision and creates no warmth in the heart. Forms, then, are justified even when they stand for what exceeds our present experience. They remind us that the facts of faith are independent of our conscious response to them.

Forms serve their highest purpose when they help a man to express what is in his heart, and they may become means of grace to the chilled and doubtful. When once it is realized that forms are but means to an end, thoughtful men will not infrequently find that occasions come to them when the formulas of religion drive them to the endeavour to attain what they represent. A man who kneels with bowed head in the attitude of prayer, though he feels no urgency of communion with God, may find before he rises that a new spirit has entered into him, that a quickening power which he cannot describe and whose origin he cannot trace has given him the true spirit of

devotion and he worships God in spirit and in truth. While forms of prayer do not guarantee the spirit of prayer they may certainly help a man to attain it.

The sinister result of formalism is the death of spiritual perception. When a man rests content with what is merely external he sooner or later loses faith and hope. The language of religion to him is but a meaningless jargon, forms of worship little more than æsthetic convention, and the life of faith is forfeited even if belief in its reality is retained. "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," such men have lost faith's dynamic and all hope of spiritual progress, not only for themselves but for others. At the end the formalist is cheated by the very things in which he trusted.

XXXII

THE USE OF CREEDS

His faith, perhaps, in some nice tenets might
Be wrong ; his life, I'm sure, was in the right.
(COWLEY, "On the Death of Crashaw.")

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.
(POPE, "Essay on Man," iii. 305.)

THUS did two seventeenth and eighteenth century English poets, in days when religious toleration, as we understand it, was imperfectly known, express the gist of certain older sayings by a greater Authority on faith and morals—"Not every one that saith unto Me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven"; "If any man willeth to do His (God's) will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be from God."

The truth which underlies such utterances—viz., that practice is higher than profession and conduct above creed—has not often been proclaimed by accredited preachers and teachers of religion : partly because mists of sectarian con-

troversy have dimmed their vision of Christ Himself; partly through fear of ecclesiastical censure by bishop or synod or congregation. The sacredness of truth, when it conflicts with traditional orthodoxy based on imperfect knowledge now discredited; or the conception that in "honest doubt" and inquiry into deep mysteries of religion the Holy Spirit of God may be at work, guiding us according to Christ's promise into all truth, not once for all, but gradually as men are able to find it—such ideas are too high for the average religious partisan, content with ignorance and afraid of light. Hence all the evil fruit of intolerance, persecution, and cruelty that has disgraced the profession of religion and made *odium theologicum* proverbial throughout the centuries. Hence the "unhappy divisions" of Christendom, which Christian preachers officially lament but unconsciously encourage by their practice. Hence the disturbing fact that faith and piety, and even saintliness of life, are still too often disfigured by a cynical carelessness about historical truth and by an appalling lack of Christian charity.

Every society, of course, needs some statement of rules or principles to serve as a test of membership. These are its *credenda* embodied in outward form, to which appeal may be made;

nor is the Christian society in its wider sense of "all that profess and call themselves Christians," or in its narrower everyday working form of different groups or "Churches," national or other, exempt from this universal law. There must be some profession of what ought to be believed (*credenda*) or what is actually at any given stage believed (*credita*)—in other words, there must be "Creeds." The ultimate, true aim of the society or societies in question is to ensure Christian conduct, to help their members to be like Christ. But this true aim is apt to be forgotten or obscured by pressing necessities of defining the conditions of membership as expressed in Creeds and of protecting the faith from innovation or attack. Hence comes jealous regard for the exact form of words in which the faith was at first expressed or settled after prolonged controversy. The preservation of this form as a sacred, inviolable deposit, "*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*," becomes the paramount object of religious effort. Attempts to reinterpret it in the light of newer knowledge or different conditions of thought are either brushed aside as futile or suppressed as "heresy"; until tradition becomes an almost intolerable burden upon freedom. To how many religious teachers of later ages might be applied the rebuke of Christ to the accredited

religious teachers of His day—"Ye make the word of God of none effect through your tradition"? If we in our turn insist too much on literal acceptance of traditional formulæ, and reject suggestions to restate them in terms of modern knowledge and thought, we surely may be the Scribes and Pharisees of our day.

Are stereotyped, unchanging beliefs essential to right conduct? That is a question at issue between the "Traditionalist" and "Modernist" schools of thought in the religious life of to-day. The Modernist, retaining the old creeds, claims liberty of interpretation in terms of modern thought and new knowledge. His intellectual conscience, no less than his moral conscience, demands satisfaction. In worship, he revolts against "the heavy hand of an ossified phraseology and a deadening conventionality." In Biblical interpretation he claims to use all the resources of modern scholarship. The Bible, he maintains, is for us of the present day, as compared with three or four centuries ago, virtually a new book, made new by the labours of critical scholars; and if this be so, there is need for fresh presentation of old truths, for translation into modern terms of the new vision of God which fresh knowledge of His revelation has given us. The organization of societies for the preservation

of Christian faith and conduct—*i.e.*, of the Christian Churches—is, he thinks, too much dominated by administrators of finance, by leaders in social activities, and by ministers of sacraments and ordinances, to the exclusion of prophets; and history shows that wherever the prophet has been silenced or suppressed, worship has tended to become mechanical or superstitious, the forms of belief have assumed more importance than Christian conduct.

Are we, as some think, on the verge of a new Reformation, which will readjust spiritual values, and set creeds and conduct in their true perspective?

By all means let us retain creeds; they are necessary finger-posts across the desert. But they are not in themselves the goal of Christian endeavour, which is for those who tread in the Master's footsteps. "Not every one that saith unto Me . . . but he that *doeth*."

XXXIII

THE WAY TO CONVICTION

THIS is an age of discussions and conferences, seldom about the foundations of religion, but often about its modes of expression and organization. If the leaders of the Church are not engaged in these matters they are absorbed, with equally distracted followers, in considering the relation of religion to social and industrial problems. It may be suggested that what is most desired is their witness to the faith and patience in its exposition. It is no advantage to discuss the forms of religion or its relation to anything else if there is uncertainty about its real foundations.

It is not that men lack faith. The trouble is that they do not recognize the true character and implications of what they believe. Meanwhile our teachers are so eagerly occupied in insisting on what is Christianity's attitude to this or that question that they do not allow themselves, or others who desire their guidance, time to appre-

hend its meaning, or rather to be apprehended by it. It would seem that religious people are in such constant fear of the charge that their faith has no message for the world that they think more of its expression than of its substance.

Men must examine what exactly their religion implies, what its basis is and what its duties are. We do not gain any true knowledge of the spiritual life if we give it nothing of ourselves. It requires patient and concentrated attention for its own truth's sake. Christianity to-day suffers through dissipation of thought and energy on the part of its representatives. Can we wonder if our religious life tends to become fussy and ineffective? It is energized by no deep conviction, and strengthened by no careful meditation. At best we use it as a means of our own comfort and forget that we cannot know it until it uses us in the transformation of life.

During the last two or three generations Christians have been summoned by modern science and scholarship to examine the real implications of the religion they profess. The conditions of modern life make the same demand. What is necessary is a clearer exposition of the verities of the faith as the fruit of patient reflection on their true meaning in the light of present

knowledge. But when they have done this we who belong to the rank and file shall best prove Christianity's worth by letting it make its own way. We are so accustomed to lament the difficulties of faith that we tend to forget that after all there are great facts of religion which all can understand if they are tried sincerely in experience. We lose in conviction, confidence, and force not because we disbelieve, but because we do not believe with our whole manhood.

Truth is apprehended in different ways. Many approach it through their emotions, others through reason, others again think of it as a challenge to will's decision in action. Every one has his own way of responding to the affirmations of religion. But if we would grasp its true significance and attain its full power all our faculties must be brought to bear upon it. If religion depends on emotion, it will inevitably become sentimentalism ; if on the intellect, it will end in merely logical formulæ ; if on its regard for comfort in this life, it will never lift itself beyond the levels of public opinion. The most general cause of failure in our faith is due to the fact that we do not bring to it the deliberate and combined action of our hearts, minds, and will.

A wise writer some time ago remarked :—

“ More often than we know the failure of religion as a moral power is due to no other cause than intellectual sloth.” There are more men whose faith dies down through failure to use their minds about it than there are men who, having used their minds, have come to the deliberate conclusion that they must reject belief in spiritual reality. It is not by any means to be supposed that those who talk most about religion know most about it. It is thought that is required; not occasional excursions into Biblical or theological questions, but the deliberate and sustained reflection on the real significance of the religion we profess. If rationalism has an evil name, that is because men have so often made religion a merely intellectual exercise. We shall avoid that mistake not by intellectual apathy, but if with our minds we employ our affections and our wills to grasp the real significance of truth.

It was once said that the attempt to find self (the individual) without God (the Universal) is to find—the Devil. Our religion cannot originate with ourselves, though it becomes what we make of it. It has its origin, activities, and consummation in God. Man-made religion is always idolatrous. He who would have a religion worth having must accept with all his powers what it offers and involves. It can mean little until we

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give our whole manhood to its demands. To make it a matter of occasional concern is to be bemused by idle questions or to become bewildered by its apparent contradictions. Concentration alone produces conviction.

XXXIV

THE TRUE APOLOGY

MANY men who are dissatisfied with the traditional forms in which Christianity is expressed, and sympathize with the efforts made to provide statements of its faith in terms of present-day thought, are driven to confess their dissatisfaction with what is offered to them in place of the Creeds of the Church. The new forms may be the expression of devout minds and do much to satisfy modern requirements, but they lack the strength of experienced conviction.

If men are seeking entirely satisfactory statements of the Christian faith they are engaged in a vain quest. Christianity is too great to be adequately described in any form of words, or indeed to be compliant to the limits of our minds or even the mind of the whole Church. The most modern declaration of the faith is affected equally with the historic creeds by the fact that we cannot express all that Christianity is found to be in history and experience. It transcends our

thought and therefore cannot be fully explicated in words. A religion which a man can completely understand is a religion not worth the devotion of his life. The simplest statement of a living faith must deal with mysteries whose full significance we cannot hope to grasp.

Christianity is simple only to "babes." The intellectualist must find it difficult, because he forgets that he must bring to it something more than an acute mind. He is right in demanding the freest exercise of thought and liberty to examine the faith by the methods and the categories he applies to other subjects of inquiry. But to learn what a religion really means this is not enough. Pascal declared that the reasons of the heart were superior to those of the intellect, and affirmed that "the interval, which is infinite, between body and mind represents the infinitely more infinite distance between intellect and charity." Charity is the supreme virtue, because all the rest is contained in it, and since, for the apprehension of Christianity, it is necessary to employ the highest power of our manhood we must bring to it the interpretative powers of moral purity with its unsullied life and confident fellowship. Only to those who are as little children are the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven revealed. Such approach religion in the

right order, first trusting to what is good and true, and then by experience gaining that knowledge which can never be attained or become sufficiently operative in life except by the adventure of faith.

A merely intellectual interest in religion never quite escapes the taint of irreverence. Reverence is the recognition of the fact that we have to do with some one greater or better than ourselves. It is the response a man makes in the presence of what is purer and higher than he himself has yet attained or perhaps can ever attain. We need not wonder if men who think that they possess the measure of truth and that all that does not come within their range must either be false or have no existence at all, find Christianity uncompliant to their demands. To gain the truth we must unite our wills with our minds and seek to explore its meaning as those who would test it in the school of life's experience, before they can hope to grasp its significance. We may never be able to account for truth or describe it as it is, but we can all attain that personal knowledge which is secured when we make it the dominant fact of life.

This is not to be understood as a defence of failure to use the mind in matters of faith, a plea for the intellectually idle or the timorous or the

obscurantist. But it is worth while pointing out that Christianity can never be properly understood or adequately expressed in the terms of pure ratiocination, and it is as necessary for the apologist of Christianity as it is for its opponents to remember this fact. We gain a knowledge of the faith we profess and commend it to others not by arguing about it or explaining it, but by living it, and that process is the only way to understand or declare its meaning. Hence the weightiest apologetic of Christianity is the witness of the Christian life, which retains its specific character in all circumstances and among all sorts and conditions of men.

At the present time many seem to suppose that Christianity's power can best be vindicated by an earnest endeavour to apply its principles to corporate life. No doubt this is necessary, for Christianity deals with men as members of a body. But it also deals with them one by one, and on every man who claims discipleship there is imposed a way of life which is designed to form a specific character, with certain qualities which are attained only when a man by his own act of will surrenders himself to the faith. When that faith is shown in terms of life men may deride it or oppose it, but they cannot ignore its witness. It is the most persuasive expression of truth, and

it is the special gift of the Christian character to offer it to the world in the terms of daily duty. In this witness there is combined all that is old and new in Christian history, and it lays hold of men with irresistible power. It offers itself to them with confidence, knowing that it speaks in terms which all can appreciate and make their own. No other testimony is so persuasive and so fundamentally true. And this is the witness which the world is looking for to-day, sometimes unconsciously, but not seldom with anxious hope that it may make a great discovery and at last find that which will give it guidance in its perplexity and strength in its great need. Each of us has a personal responsibility in this matter. As we discharge it we learn the secret of faith and in our lives inevitably make it known to our fellow-men.

XXXV

THE TRUE QUEST

DIVINE revelation comes in many ways, and men vary in their ability to discern and to respond to it. What is true to one man may be meaningless to another. Yet every one has his opportunity of vision, for at some time or other there comes to each a hint, a glimpse, a light in the heavens beckoning him to follow its guidance. Rarely at first does it come with any overwhelming brilliance. That may be reserved for a later time. Often the light shines so faintly that we are uncertain of its power to persist in the surrounding light or to hold its own among the garish lights of the world's day. But he who follows the light when he sees it will not fail.

There is a light within the man, the inner light which is given for guidance in those hidden activities by which he may grow in knowledge of himself and in the knowledge of God. This is the light to be sheltered from the storms of the world and the sudden gusts of passion which

sweep through the soul. But men do not grasp the full purpose of their manhood until they also learn to discern the light above and beyond themselves shining in the heavens. Light is all one, but it manifests itself in different ways. That which is within is for reflection, for guidance in the secret commerce of a man with God and with himself. The light that is above beckons him away from home on a quest in which he must be ready for great adventures, leaving all to follow where it may lead him.

The story of the Magi's quest is the representation of a fact of human experience in every age. Only as we read it as such can we learn its true significance. Those who look up to the heavens see a light which invites them to a diligent search, summoning them to a quest for truth in which they must leave what is familiar to follow what is still unknown. Most men are too engrossed with the cares and pleasures of this life, with eyes bent on the ground in anxious search for the prizes of this world, to see any light in the heavens. There is no vision for the groundlings of worldly desire. They are puzzled when men go out to follow what to them is a figment of the mind, an unsubstantial creation of undisciplined fancy. Only those who lift their eyes above the mists of the world can catch a gleam of the star.

But it is not enough to see the light. Men must follow it if they would learn its purpose. They must gird themselves for a journey whose end is unknown, and leave what holds their fellows for a quest which demands self-sacrifice to the utmost. All good and true men like "those star-led wizards on the Eastern road" start their way with no clear notion as to where they may find themselves on the morrow. But the very uncertainty of the future has its own joy. When once a man sets out on the great quest he is satisfied to be unsatisfied. He knows he is advancing to a goal which will ultimately justify his adventure, and he is willing to take the risks of his enterprise, because by meeting them he prepares himself to be worthy of the end. At least he has the joy of entire dedication to his purpose. He sees his duty and he is content to do it in the light of the supernatural revelation which glows before him. Progress on the path is itself so great a joy that he is almost tempted to believe that it is joy enough. Other men may be haunted by the ideal. He is devoted to it. Others may groan or shout in rebellion, when the reality of the supernatural cannot be ignored. He goes forward faithfully with his face towards the light.

But those who have left all to follow the star know the distractions of frequent perplexity.

The Evangelist tells us that at the critical moment the star could no longer be seen by the wise men, and they were driven to ask of others where the Child might be. It is the bitterest trial of the faithful seeker to look up for the light and to find himself with no clear sign pointing the way. Those who set out on the great quest challenged by the star of truth, of justice, of righteousness, are not seldom left without the visible guidance of that by which all their efforts have been directed. Prophets, martyrs, saints, reformers know this experience. In their perplexity they have appealed to those who are the recognized exponents of the truth, and what they learn has its value. But it is not enough. It is well for the sailor to have his charts with him, but he needs the star to be sure that his reading of them is true. So the traveller over the ocean of life rightly avails himself of the authority of others' experience, for it is often the only thing left him to do, but not until he is able to see the light above to reinforce the authority of others can he go forward with full confidence.

The quest was not for gain, not to receive anything, but to give. Sacrifice is the great keyword of life. It is the end and the beginning of all true living. Renunciation was the experience of the pilgrims as they started from the East to find

the King. It was not completed until they offered Him their gifts. The end of the search is not a prize to be gained, but a sacrifice to be made. Not to gain, but to give ; not to reign, but to serve ; not for safety, but for service, is the purpose of those who follow the star.

XXXVI

THE SANCTUARY

EVERY religion has its sacred places. In primitive cults, trees, hills, pillars, and other objects are associated with the presence of the god. Regarding these shrines as dwelling-places of the deity, worshippers came to them with their offerings, seeking protection in danger and counsel in their perplexities. In these sanctuaries men believed that they came into immediate contact with the objects of their worship.

This conception of the dwelling-place of God as a sanctuary of refuge has persisted in the Christian Church. The custom of seeking sanctuary at some well-known shrine persisted for centuries, and men and women in this country as elsewhere found in them an asylum from violence in days when might was right and the weak were defenceless against their enemies. In England, sanctuary existed until quite modern times, and it was not until the reign of George I. that Westminster Abbey ceased in law to be an asylum for

the wrong-doer. Indeed, it is said that the Abbey of Holyrood is still by law a sanctuary for debtors, though the abolition of imprisonment for debt has rendered the privilege useless. It must be confessed that sometimes these places of refuge became the haunts of worthless men who remained a menace to the neighbourhood in which they settled, so that often what had been held to be a sacred place became the scene of reckless wrongdoing.

Christian Churches no longer shelter men from the just recompense of their offences against their fellows, but they may still be considered sanctuaries of refuge. If we do not think that the Divine Presence is confined to any one place, in a true sense we call a Church the House of God, for there we find Him present to listen to the prayers and accept the homage of sinful men, who thus find peace of heart. In such a sanctuary men have a refuge from the turmoils and noise of the world, and the exhausting claims which deaden the life of the spirit. Our spiritual enemies, for they are real however we may think of them, are relentless in their insidious attacks, and though it becomes a sincere man who would play his part well in the battle of life to stand up valiantly against his foes, and confront their attack with courage, there are occasions when he

must needs seek rest if only to prepare for a more vigorous conflict afterwards. In such circumstances a church may prove a true sanctuary for troubled and sinful man. There may be no one else present as he kneels in the silence, conscious of God and His assurance of forgiveness of the past and strength for the struggle which must be met in the future.

An open church in a crowded city has thus often proved the gate to heaven's peace. There a man beset by evil without and within may find the truth about the world, himself and about God, gaining an inspiration for irksome duty in circumstances which might have been overwhelming. Some may explain this experience of the Divine Presence as but the reflex influence of silence or the result of self-suggestion, or it may be an unconscious response of the æsthetic sense to what is beautiful, but those who know best account for their experience in another fashion. And are they not justified in their conviction that they have been in the Presence of Him who is as a hiding-place to a man, a refuge in the time of trouble? Such a sanctuary may be bare and ugly, and yet there men find Him who makes what else would seem almost tomb-like in its forbidding chill glow with warmth, splendour, and beauty as it is found to be the dwelling-place of God.

A real sanctuary, however, may be found in a man's own heart, for, after all, the truest place of worship is where the Divine and human meet within the soul, a sanctuary of the Presence within a man's self where rest, confidence, and joy are found. There all the clamour of the world and the terrors of conscience cease in the consciousness of him who feels even to the deepest recesses of life that there is no place left for the teasing littleness of self or the violent assaults of the world. A life without its sanctuary is the sport of every gust of passion, at last falling into the darkness of spiritual death. Enfeebled in spiritual life and exposed to every temptation he is lost to himself and to God in the bewilderment of his own unrest. Not until a man enters into the Sanctuary of the Presence can he find peace.

If I could shut the gate against my thoughts
And keep out sorrow from this room within,
Or memory could cancel all the notes
Of my misdeeds, and I unthink my sin :
How free, how clear, how clean my soul should lie,
Discharged of such a loathsome company !

XXXVII

THE PRELUDE TO PETITION

IN its deepest life the spirit of man knows that prayer is not a soliloquy, but a communion with Another. He is infinitely near ; He dwells within the secret shrine ; and yet He is other than we. There is communion between the two ; there is coming and going, traffic and interchange of thought and purpose ; there is speech and answer. It belongs to the character of the spiritual life that it should have these two movements, receiving and giving. The soul must learn to speak, but first it must learn to listen. Its progress will depend upon the measure in which it gives freedom for both movements ; but for most men in the Western world it is harder to listen than to speak ; and listening should be the prelude to petition.

“ Let all doctors hold their peace, and let all creatures keep silence in Thy sight ; speak Thou alone to me. . . . Blessed is the soul which hears the Lord speaking within her ; and receives from His mouth the word of consolation.” With such

words à Kempis bids the soul become a listener to the voice that speaks first. It belongs to the heart of all religious experience to confess that every movement of the spirit towards God is an answer to His grace. This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us. This too is prayer, not that we speak to God, but that He has first spoken to us.

It might have been imagined that He would wait till after long-searching man at the last could penetrate into His presence, and have audience and receive his answer. But the soul of man has never rested in such a thought of God ; he has never been able to interpret his own experience, save as a thing derived. The speech of the soul has all the character of an answer to a voice, often dimly heard, often for long stretches of time undetected, and yet the voice of an Eternal Friend seeking for man. And they who have attained to mastery, and the right to speak on such matters, always bid men first of all to be quiet and to listen. The Lord is in His Holy temple ; let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Before men offer their petitions they do well to be silent. Only so can they hear what voices are speaking. Tennyson describes the unseen dead as near to their friends, but unable at times to speak :

But when the heart is full of din
And doubt beside the portal waits,
They can but listen at the gates
And hear the household jar within.

If there is a Divine voice speaking, and through its message the soul may discover more of the One, to whom it would go, then it must be ready to listen. The noise within the house of life must be stilled.

Man must listen so that he may learn more of Him, to whom he is coming. Prayer takes its character from the God, to whom it is offered. The range of petition is limited by the conception of the Divine purpose, and when certain desires are no longer absorbing the soul it can bring with greater intensity its true needs into the light of the Eternal Will. If prayer is an answer to a prior word, then it will be freed from much that is wild and foolish. It is a waste of spiritual energy to pray without listening. In the common business of life the man who is in too great a hurry to listen and too busy ever to be quiet is the most wasteful of all men. It is an economy of energy to know how to be quiet. If that is true in the pursuit of business or in the study of art or in the search after truth, it is not likely to be less true of the soul in its dealings with its Divine Lord.

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Before men pray they can listen to the voice, which will lead them into the secret of the Eternal Purpose. They will have a vision of the one master-interest of their lives and of all lives. They will see themselves as they are in that searching and burning light. The chief things will become certain, and the lesser things will marshal themselves in their true order. Before any petition is offered, they will adjust themselves to that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. To that revelation all that follows is but an answer. To attain to the true vantage-ground of prayer, it is necessary to heed the prelude. Before men speak to Him they must let Him tell them of His will. "If we would know Him indeed," wrote William Penn, "it must be from the impressions we receive of Him; and the softer our hearts are the deeper and livelier those will be upon us."

Men have so little time for prayer in their crowded days, that they are tempted to use what they have in presenting their petitions before the Most High. For silence and waiting there seems little space. They speak, and then they trust God will answer. His part is to listen; theirs to speak. But that is but a broken communion, in which the soul can never come to its inheritance. Men will spend their time better, however

brief it is, if they are prepared first to listen. For the God with whom they have to do is not only the Eternal Listener, but the God who breaks the silence. It is He who waits for the answer.

XXXVIII

FORGIVENESS OF SIN

FORGIVENESS has a prominent place in the Christian Gospel. The Master assures a sick man brought to Him by faithful friends that his sins are forgiven. A sinful and distressed woman coming with tears is absolved, for though her sins were many yet she loved much. The Apostles preached a gospel of free forgiveness. The Church's Creed declares its belief in the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is for everybody.

But forgiveness is not concerned merely with the sins that men commit. We may not represent forgiveness as if it were a part in a recurrent series of acts beginning with a sinful act, followed by repentance of it, and succeeded by forgiveness in a continually repeated cycle. We must go behind the sinful act to the character of the sinner and what he is in his own soul. For he is not merely a sinner, he is sinful. There is that in him affecting his whole nature which separates him from truth and goodness, and renders him

incapable of spiritual progress. It is not asserted that there is nothing true and good in a sinful man, but that everything in him is affected by sin, which has corrupted his manhood.

From this point of view sin is not merely lawlessness, it is a condition of character, or that which robs life of its spiritual vigour and moral beauty. Forgiveness must be concerned with this loss, this weakness of spiritual power, this failure to develop according to the law of manhood's righteousness. Thus forgiveness is not merely a passing over of transgression, or a remission of penalty, it must deal with the inner weakness and the disordered nature of men. Forgiveness of sin is real only so far as man becomes free from sin, and attains a new vigour of life which enables him to put away the evil that is within himself and to gain the full activity of all his spiritual and moral powers.

Perhaps this fact becomes plain when we follow the guidance of the Evangelists in their record of the healing works of Christ. A man restored from sickness to health is said to be made whole. The same phrase is used of a man who is forgiven his sins. The man's body when made whole is freed from disease or weakness, and it functions in the full harmony of all its powers. So a man who has been forgiven his sin is made

whole and his spiritual powers are restored. He moves forward with penitence to do the will of God, finding his conscience, affections, and will purified and strengthened in the power of a new life. It is because Christ is held to be the source of this new life, the life which frees men from sin, that He is called the Saviour of men.

The Christian doctrine of forgiveness is always associated with the Cross. There are mysteries in that death which we cannot hope to fathom, but when once we acknowledge that the Sufferer is Divine, we cannot but believe that there was something accomplished through the Cross which has infinite results. There He gave His life for men, and those who in penitence and faith identify themselves with that perfect Sacrifice know themselves to be forgiven. The saints of Christendom unite in their testimony to the power of the forgiveness of the Cross and they demonstrate its reality in their own lives. This forgiveness is not merely a putting away of the record of our sins, the payment of a debt or the recovery of privilege, but the gift of a new life by which a man shall, in ever fuller reality, become free from sin's taint and disablement. Forgiveness is the giving by God of His own Divine life, which if a man receives he shall be free from sin. Thus

forgiveness is fellowship with God, life in union with Him, controlled and sustained by the energies of Divine Love manifested by the Cross.

But because forgiveness of sins implies fellowship with God, it is plain that if we would obtain forgiveness we must be ready to forgive others. This is no covenant of service to be rendered before we can receive payment. But the measure of our capacity to receive the life which frees us from sin, that which makes forgiveness real to us, is conditioned by our willingness to bring others into that fellowship, that they also in the strength of the Spirit may become free from sin and servants of righteousness. We must give to others the power which forgiveness has brought to ourselves. For here also forgiveness is not merely a wiping out of offences, but the gift of life, even at a great sacrifice, to assist our fellow-men to move forward in the amplitude of life in perfect freedom from sin.

This belief in forgiveness must have large consequences. It forbids us to despair either of ourselves or of others. We are never, as long as life lasts, outside the redemptive power of Him who is ever ready to have mercy and to forgive. While there is life there is opportunity of forgiveness, to be received from God and to be given by

us to our fellow-men. Here we come to the law of true fellowship. In so far as we forgive others their sins, we attain more and more completely the fellowship of life which overcomes evil with good.

XXXIX

DISCIPLESHIP

ALL who profess to be Christians claim to be the disciples of one Master. The most common title applied to Him in the Gospels is that of Teacher. Our English version disguises this by using different words, such as Master or Rabbi, in translating it, but to His contemporaries Christ was pre-eminently a teacher, and those who were associated most closely with Him were called disciples. When his public ministry was ended, the old relationship could not continue, but his followers still called themselves disciples, and apparently for a time it was confined to those who had been personally attached to Christ or were numbered among His Palestinian followers. Others, at a later period, hesitated to claim so honourable a name, but a time came when it was applied to all Christians, and this is its general use to-day.

Conscious that there is much to be learnt, the disciples will always seek further knowledge from

their Teacher. They know that there is more and more truth He has to teach, and they can secure the knowledge for which they are seeking from no one else. He is the Teacher sent from God, ready to instruct men in the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. But He will teach men only on condition that they remain in His company, listen with attention to His instruction, and test it in their lives. For He claims absolute authority over His pupils, and demands that they shall not only accept His teaching, but conform to all His demands, though they may run counter to their own desires and call them to the uttermost self-sacrifice. Such are the conditions with which men must comply before they can understand the truth He teaches.

Christian discipleship implies definite self-surrender. Sometimes those who desire to join the Divine Teacher are bidden to leave all their possessions and make every relationship of life subsidiary to the duty of allegiance to their Master. Most must needs remain in the world, but all must give up something which men hold dear before they can be enrolled as members of His school. "He that doth not take his cross, and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me." The first condition of discipleship is singleness of purpose and loyal acceptance of His guidance.

His followers may not pick and choose what they will accept. Everything He has to teach is of importance, and the disciple must obey Him in entire humility. A master in Israel like Nicodemus, alike with outcasts of the Galilean villages, must become as little children. He does not require that they should have great gifts. He is willing to take even the basest of men, but they must have one qualification—entire devotion to Himself. They must acknowledge His Lordship.

Those who cannot subordinate all other claims to those He makes are not accepted. There can be no doubt that He desires to welcome all who would come with faith and resolution, but He never disguises the cost of their venture; and having found Him, they learn that they are not called upon to accept any system, with a clearly imposed discipline. He is His own lesson, and the sum of His doctrine is described by His demand, "Learn of Me." He does not deal in hypotheses, or beguile their attention with theories. His teaching is practical, positive, final. This Teacher does not ask whether His lessons are to men's liking, but insists that they shall be accepted and obeyed. Yet, while He claims absolute authority over His disciples, He robs them of nothing of their manhood, but rather adds to its liberty and power.

His teaching is found to have infinite depths of thought and life in it. There is nothing shallow or merely partial in His instruction. Sometimes it is framed in a form which is forbidding to the neophyte, and on occasion it is so paradoxical that it puzzles His hearers. No wonder they discuss what the real meaning of His words may be, and are bewildered by its strange contradiction to what they judge to be the experience of life. When, however, they apply it to the test of practice it provides its own justification, not only as true but as creative, leading men to new visions of the will of God, new motives for accepting His teaching, and new power to apply it in every circumstance with the joyous confidence of those who find that their Teacher is not only a guide in times of darkness, but a constant inspiration in every perplexity.

Though the disciples always depend on Him as their sole Teacher, they must recognize their obligations to their fellow students. He teaches them one by one, but yet it is only as they live in fellowship with each other that they can find the means of that wide experimental test of the truth necessary for its true interpretation. The prayer of discipleship is to be used by each in union with all. The petition of each is to be addressed to Him who is known as "Our Father."

All pray for the coming of the Kingdom. The petitions they offer are for each other—"Give us," "deliver us." For discipleship to Christ implies fellowship, with its careful regard for others' needs and sorrows, an entire forgiveness of their failures, a loyal comradeship in a common brotherhood.

The disciples of Christ not only learn the truth about their Master, they also learn the truth about themselves, their fellows, and the world in which they live. They adopt His standard of values, and though it reverses the judgment of mankind, those who accept find it to be the light of truth which grows more and more in the amplitude of its revelation of Divine Love.

XL

CROSS-BEARERS

THE Cross is rooted in the earth, but it rises to heaven, and its arms stretch out as if it would embrace both. It stands in the centre of the world, and though men may try to ignore it, sooner or later they have to face its insistent summons. Some come upon it early and make it the badge of their life's gallant warfare, others reach it later to find it the assurance of forgiveness. If it does not become either a banner of faith or the pledge of absolution it must at the end surely prove a tribunal of judgment.

Sorrow and sin are in the world, and they prepare the way to the Cross. Nothing is so impatient with the disguises or conventions which men adopt in the commerce of life than some great sorrow. They may try to bear their pain stoically or dull its sharp agony by the opiate of work or the excitement of pleasure, but if they face it frankly and bear it bravely, they find that it leads to the Cross, with its high achievement of

redemption. The Cross forbids the dark suggestion that we are either the sport of chance or the victims of malignant fate, and shows us how the world's trouble may make life true and beautiful. We are tempted to think of pain and sorrow as an irrational interference with our plans, a humiliating hindrance to the attainment of our hopes. So long as we thus look at sorrow, misfortune, disappointment, we find no meaning in life, but if we look at it in the revelation of the Cross the enigma is explained. Those who take up the Cross find it the key of life.

The Suffering Servant of the Lord takes up his Cross voluntarily. He accepts it because he sees this is according to the will of his Father. There is a real congruity between human suffering and the Cross. They match each other, and in their alliance show how the will of man may be brought into harmony with the Divine will, so that from the darkness and the sin of the world there may issue a life purified by sacrifice and reinvigorated to obedience. If the universal experience of pain presents problems which we cannot hope to solve, the Cross shows how it has a beneficent purpose :—

For thus it is God stings us into life,
Provoking actual souls
From bodily systems, giving us the poles
That are His own, not merely balanced strife.

Readers of the Gospel narratives feel that a great purpose is in the mind of Christ throughout His passion. Everything moves forward to the final scene on Calvary, as it were in purposeful compliance with a will which made the fury of the Jews, the cunning of the priests, and the contempt of the Roman authorities bend to the perfect accomplishment of what He had in mind to gain through His sufferings. The Man of Sorrows takes up His Cross because it is the means by which He can carry out His own redemptive purpose for mankind. He exerts a new royalty for this strange throne. What is apparent in the synoptic narratives becomes the dominant thought in the mind of the writer of the fourth Gospel. To him the Cross-bearer is the King who controls all, and makes alike the fury and diplomacy of his enemies the instrument of victory. The Cross reveals Him as the Master not only of His own life, but of the fortunes of all men. He is the Lord even of death, the last enemy. For the Cross lifts itself to heaven, and He who offers Himself on it is crowned with its Divine glory.

The world's masters are always cross-bearers, for true authority has its justification in a man's readiness to suffer for others. The kings of men are those who serve them at the cost of pain,

humiliation, and, it may be, death. These enjoy a sovereignty which is undisputed, though all may share it on the same terms on which it has been won. We look for evidence of men's strength in self-assertion; the Cross shows that the strongest will is found in submission, in voluntary renunciation. Euripedes matches Ovid in his confession of the weakness of man's will, and St Paul adds to both the testimony of personal experience. But when once a man has taken up the burden of the Cross with set purpose and goes forward to suffer in loyal service to others with the quiet resolution of one who never flinches in danger and remains faithful in the bitterest distress, he finds the instrument of pain to be the seal of his royalty in the Divine Kingdom.

Every one can understand the witness of the Cross and learn its paradox of sorrow leading to ever greater joy. That which is so forbidding becomes a pledge of abiding happiness. It is so true to life, ignoring neither man's sin nor his possibilities of goodness. When that which is most dreaded in pain, its loneliness, is accepted, it is found to be the means of companionship which makes the sorrowful way a path of royal progress to the fellowship which is life in the City of God. And since experience shows that the Cross can win man's attention and homage when they are

deaf to every other appeal, it stands for the pledge of Divine love, which shrinks from nothing if only it can win us to accept its offer. He who is the Crucified calls men to share His Cross that they may gain the true sovereignty of life.

XLI

SWIFTNESS IN THE DIVINE ACTION

To man it is not hard in these days to believe that God moves slowly. But in the season of Advent he is summoned to think of swift actions, of tempests breaking from cloudless skies, of surprises and midnight alarms. He is called in the light of the Historic Coming of his Lord to remember that He is for ever at hand, and at any moment may break through the barriers.

To man familiar with the æons, which science demands for its history and prophecy, always before him, there is delivered to him at this season a strange message. He has thought of the sweep of the Divine purpose through æons, he must now adjust his mind to the thought of a Day. A being, held in a process which seems like a stately and solemn procession, he must listen to chants and readings full of crisis and judgment and the last things. He has a vision of the process consummated. A word comes to him out of the wisdom of the past, to shake him out

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of his torpor. No longer is he suffered to think only of the still small voice of God. He must listen for Him in storm and earthquake and fire. He must now adjust himself to the call of a God who may work slowly, but may come swiftly. He must not be limited. The Divine freedom of approach must be vindicated. For the sudden coming of the Lord down unknown ways he must be ready. The air is full of warnings. *Watch ye, for ye know not the day nor the hour.*

Such a message can only be understood when it is remembered that He of whom it speaks is dealing now, not with constellations, or glaciers, or rocks, but with *the spirit of man*. There is something in man that responds to words which speak of crisis and swift changes. That is how things have happened to him. In the story of his inner life there are long stretches of uneventful history, but then come moments of storm, in which more happens than in many years. Man knows from his own heart that God can act swiftly.

Swift movements within the human scene can be understood by those who remember that the Christian Gospel is the message of God in Christ to the spirit of man, and its action is personal. Those who think personally find the language of Advent strangely true to the facts.

Within the life of man changes come as that greatest of all changes is said to come. One look, and a life begins afresh. One word out of the silence, and the stately fabric of thought is laid in the dust. Former things are passed away. So the Lord Himself may come on the wings of some word ; it does not take years, though the years may have prepared for that moment. But the action of That Other Spirit upon the spirit of man may be swift as the lightning.

The more man learns of the deep mysteries within him and of the revolutions, sleeping there, the more ready he is to listen to the sound which rings through the ears of the sleepers like the sound of a trumpet. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. . . . Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.* He can read with the right clue the language of the New Testament. The writers are not greatly concerned with the action of their Lord upon impersonal things. They know that He is dealing with man, spirit with spirit. They could know but little of the slow movements of the Divine Hand in Nature, but in the inner world of the Spirit, which they and we must share, they knew in experience that things happen quickly. God had come to their rescue swiftly. In His kingdom there could be no bound of times and seasons.

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What He had done once He could do again. He might delay the fulfilment of His purpose. But they knew also that He might at any moment surprise them. Therefore they watched, and life took for them the note of vigilance and endurance.

So long as men will think of the Divine Action only in terms of institutions, and not of personal action, they will find the startling promises of Advent words in a foreign tongue. But if they will think of human personality and of One who came and still comes into intimate relations with it, they will not set any limits to the Divine Grace. They will read the promises of Advent with understanding eyes.

They will know that there are always a myriad ways open into the innermost secret hold of man's life, and at the same moment through a multitude of human personalities, the same mighty word might sound. It may take æons to wear away the rock ; but in a moment the new life may begin for the human spirit ; and in one moment the slow preparations of years may find swift fulfilment ; and because of these things, though worshippers in Advent may interpret the language of promise and of crisis in varying ways, yet they have much which they can share. They rejoice alike in the faith that they are in the realm of One to whom they can set no bounds.

They will not say, "Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!" They wait in humility and in reverence for His will, ready if He be slow, ready no less if He come quickly. "The readiness is all."

With that they will be content. They watch for Him down whatever road He may come. And like the faithful and wise steward, they go about their Lord's business even while they watch. They are ready for the unexpected. They are proof against surprises. For they know that they are dealing with two mysterious and unfathomed things, the Grace of their Lord and the heart of man.

XLII

CHRISTIANITY'S SUCCESS

TO-DAY we often appear to be more conscious of the failure than of the triumph of Christianity. Time, it would seem, has revealed weaknesses in it hitherto latent. New circumstances have brought more searching tests of its strength. Whatever might have been its fortunes in the past, we are conscious of its weaknesses and deficiencies and the growing forces which oppose it. Modern civilization is apparently too strong for the Christian Church.

It is well to face these assertions, for the point of view they express is also held by many who are silent, whether in distress or in complaisant acquiescence. But we must remind ourselves that the failure of Christianity has often been taken for granted in the past, though events have proved that it has a wonderful power of revival. Often it has risen out of its defeats and proceeded to new victories. It is true that much which has been identified with Christianity has had to

be abandoned, and that it has been compelled to discard modes of expression and rules of life which have been considered essential to its existence. Few things are more remarkable than Christianity's power to attain new strength out of what might have appeared to be the appointed agents of its destruction.

The times in which we live have brought specially disintegrating forces against Christianity, and no one can disguise their effects. Must we come to the conclusion that Christianity is weakened, or at last imprisoned in fetters which hold it fast? Have we come to its time of collapse? We must confess that as we look out on the world at home and abroad, at our social, commercial, and economic life, there is much which would seem to justify this pessimism. It is difficult for us to speak of Christianity's dominance. We are more conscious of its confusion and impotence than we are of its power. We find it little to our satisfaction when we are told that we must distinguish between Christianity and the society which is its appointed expression, or the lives of those who profess to follow it. Every one will confess that the disparity here is too wide to be ignored. But, after all, Christianity is not merely a religious system, with special doctrines, discipline, and worship. Its

success or failure is not to be judged by its persistence as a system or a regulated order of life. It is a spiritual life working in ways we cannot trace and with an influence we can easily mistake, assuming forms we may fail to recognize, and exerting power we may attribute to other sources.

May not the frequent plaint of Christianity's failure be an assurance of its true success? At any rate, it shows that men expect great things from it. But this expectation can only be justified by our recognition of its true character and office. If we examine what we call the ages of faith, do we not find in them what contemporary observers regarded as the justification of their fearful forebodings for its future? When we bemoan Christianity's failure, are we sure that we have really given it free action in the difficulties which confront us? Perhaps it is here that we come upon a fact which certainly does not flatter our judgment, for sensible men will not condemn as a failure what they have never given a real trial. Coleridge's declaration that Christianity is not a theory, or a speculation, but a life—not a philosophy of life, but a life and a living process—needs to be remembered. Its power can be comprehended only by giving it a fair trial.

There is one element in Christianity which has always marked it, and remains an essential part

of its life. It is a religion of hope. In this it differs from the other great religions of the world. They look back to the past. Their golden age dawned long ago, to leave their followers in the dim light of an imperfect day. Christianity, on the other hand, looks forward to the future. It leads men to a fuller light and a larger life. When men are most conscious of its ineffectiveness, it finds a new ground for confidence in what lies before it. Christianity looks across the long distances of history, over the mists of the earth, beyond the present struggle, with its mingled fortunes and frequent defeats, to see the vision of the City of God. As long as that ideal remains Christianity will live and grow.

Yet this is not all. This hope cannot persist except on one condition. It must be accompanied by the recognition of the fact that its attainment is not man's work. It is God's. Perhaps this is the hardest lesson of all for us to learn, and our gloomy forebodings arise from our failure to accept it. There is much wisdom in the devout warrior's declaration that, if we would have God mend the world, we must help Him to mend it. And if we remembered this, we would be too eager in our tasks to spare time to moan impending failure. We must allow God His free course in the world. The kingdom of truth, righteous-

ness, and peace is the work of His Holy Spirit. It is His action in and through us ; yet His action always. It is the assurance of Christianity that He will continue in this redemptive purpose. Allied to our manhood, He will carry it forward to perfection, both for the individual and the race. As long as this faith remains it is merely the paradox of faithlessness to indulge in forebodings of failure.


XLIII

THE ENDING

WE spend our years as a tale that is told, but to which class of tale does it belong? What would make a happy ending to our human story? Under what conditions dare we claim it as a divine comedy? If, for example, out of the confusion of history there came into existence at last a human society liberated from all waste and shame, and comforted for all the travail of the past, would that be the happy close?

In such a world man would live out his days and surround himself with beauty; he would push back the barriers of mystery; he would be the heir of all the ages and reap what others have sown in tears. Is the hope of such a day enough to cheer the spirit of man in his long struggle? Does it turn his tragedy to comedy?

It certainly does not look as if man were made to be but a transient creature in a process; a tool in the hands of a Destiny, soon to be thrown away as useless; a rough draft to be torn up



when the glorious drawing is complete. Something within man cries out that he is more than a means to an end. If that were all, much of his deepest life would seem mockery. The premonitions of his love would then be but a bribe or an illusion fostered within him for Nature's ends, in which he himself would have no part.

But even if all the generations were to yield their life to some ideal age to come, would these happy mortals themselves have an ending to satisfy the human heart? There would always be death. And in some remote future there would be no more life on the planet. There might be a wonderful story with no one to tell it, and no one to read. And this would be the close of the tremendous experiment.

Such an end could only satisfy the spirit of man if he were prepared to renounce as idle dreaming much that hitherto he has prized as his chief glory. He must sell all that he has of hopes that transcend death, and "into glory peep." Man as prophets and seers have interpreted him must go. Man in his more modest part, if in this world alone he has hope, must rebuild the fabric of his thought and policy. In such a case it is true, as fearless thinkers have urged, that he must build upon a foundation of despair. Life to him

if he uses the old terms will be a tragedy. It will be a clash between man with his illusion of freedom and adamant necessity. Man dashing himself against the iron door of his prison! It will be better to forget that he ever dreamed that there was something beyond the door.

But, on the other hand, it would be no more satisfying if the end were irrelevant to the long process. If, for example, a few were rescued out of the wreck, and carried into some other world, kept for them, that would be no end. The end must be a consummation of the whole drama. The last act must gather up all the threads. No end can be a worthy end which is not a judgment upon the whole. There can be nothing arbitrary, nothing irrelevant. The past must be taken into the sum of things, and seen as it has been held throughout in the strong hands of the Holy Love of God.

There must be another world, if we are to escape from tragedy. We cannot do without it. But by another world we do not mean one that begins at death, but in the words of a great teacher, Dr P. T. Forsyth, "another dimension of things, that both haunts the precincts and fills the spaces of this life always."

It is in its offer of such a world to faith that Christianity makes its answer to the eager question

of all serious thinkers. It offers another world, but not other in the sense of a sequel, or a new beginning, but other in its range and glory, while all the time the Lord of that world holds the destiny of humanity within His sure hands. From Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. . . .

On the one hand, Christianity confirms the solemn judgment that the end of the story, so far as the earth-bound vision can reach, is tragedy, Christianity has much in common with pessimism. Life would be a tragedy, but for the revelation that it belongs to another order—but for the Kingdom of God. But that Kingdom is already here. The eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested unto us. The eternal Lord and Life above and within the world is shaping the destiny of man. Because of Him the two orders, the seen and unseen, are linked together, and time is shot through and through with eternal light. He is a present possession and a future hope. The Christian's experience of his Lord is itself an assurance that all things are to be subdued at the last to His purpose. He does not say that he has found, after striking a balance, that there is more of happiness than of woe in the world. The tremendous character of the struggle he of all men has the least reason to deny. Not

through any shallow optimism does he see the golden light of a happy destiny upon his path. It is because of the love of God in Christ Jesus that he knows the end to be secure. Nothing can separate him and his race from that love, neither things present nor things to come. . . . As he reads the story in faith there can be only one end. The lines are converging upon that destiny, and they will meet, though not in the realm of time. The intervening stages are dark, but the end is clear, for it rests upon the character of God. And he who has confessed that He is Holy and Redeeming Love sees the human scene as a movement within that Love. It is no tragedy.

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